



FROM DRURY LANE TO MECCA

*Being an Account of the strange Life and Adventures
of Hedley Churchward (also known as
Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward),
an English Convert to
Islam*

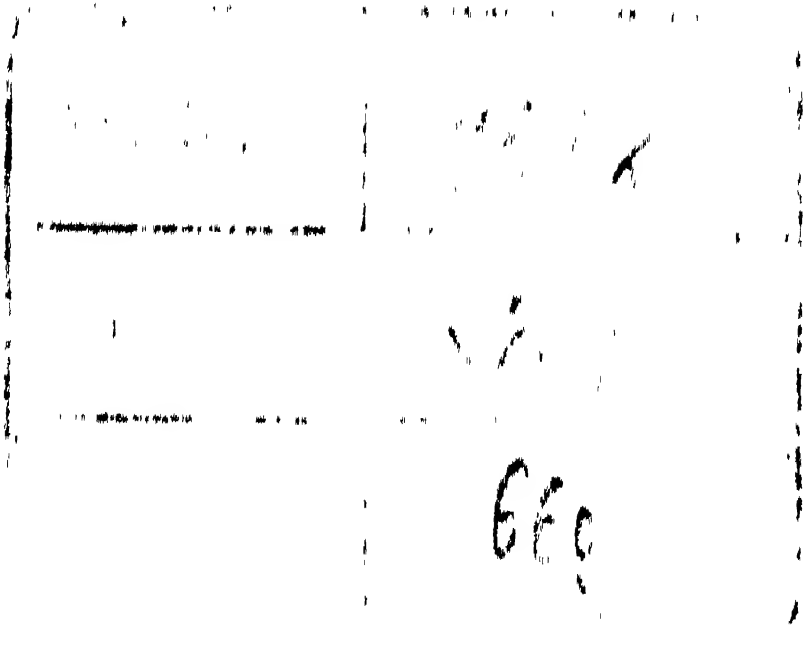
Told by
ERIC ROSENTHAL



"It may well be said that Christian travellers like Burckhart, Burton, Maltzan, and others have exhausted the subject relating to the Holy Places of Islam, but a Mahomedan sees more and better than any foreigner."

ARMINIUS VAMBERY.

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PART ONE
THE PILGRIM

THE PILGRIM

"ALLAH is great! Allah is merciful!"

One sunny African morning, late in the year 1929, hundreds of bearded Orientals were sonorously chanting these words as they carried the body of a fellow-Moslem into the cemetery at Johannesburg, the Gold City of the Transvaal. Long, shuffling lines of slippered Believers thronged around a bier covered with blue cloth. Each man wished to take his turn, if only for a few steps, at the meritorious duty of bearing a friend to the Last Rest. High above the sturdy shoulders of the Mahomedans bobbed the bright-hued litter. Malay priests in bleached linen gowns and coloured turbans, elderly Indian merchants wearing wide-skirted coats and fezzes, their modernist Asiatic clerks who merely retained the tarbush to show their connection with Islam, professional Arab pilgrims in purple and scarlet robes—every type of those Mussulmans who have migrated to Africa could be seen devoutly trudging in that funeral procession, sometimes taking, sometimes releasing, their hold on the bier as they walked and prayed according to the precepts of the Koran.

Yet the dead man, in whose memory they muttered farewell orisons amid the glary space beside the grave, who, pursuant to his religion's Democracy of Death,

was buried under rough loose planks in a shroud dipped in water from Mecca and with his face looking towards that Holy City, belonged to no Eastern race. He was Hedley Churchward, known to the mourners as Haji Mahmoud Mobarek, born of a pious Anglican family at the Hampshire cantonment town of Aldershot.

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From Drury Lane to Mecca, from sedatest Britain to the most extravagant Orient--thus ran the career of this strange adventurer. Having been one of his good friends I am able to tell his story.

Few families had a more thoroughly English origin than the Churchwards. The Kingdom's second oldest inhabited dwelling-house was in their possession. They controlled an ecclesiastical living in South Devon for close on seven hundred years, and Professor Ernest Weekley, writing about the origins of surnames, mentions theirs to show the antiquity of a churchwarden's office. Notwithstanding his thorough conversion to Islam, the man laid to rest by the Johannesburg Mahomedans, remained till his last day a unique combination of the old-fashioned Briton and the genuine Oriental.

When, as a result of the military reorganization produced by the Crimean War, a temporary army camp at Aldershot was changed into a colony of barracks and drill halls for England's soldiery, a whiskered caterer who had studied under Queen Victoria's chef, Monsieur

Francatelli, thought the new settlement, with its prosperous regimental messes and numerous wealthy officers, might furnish him with many profitable opportunities. That pioneer was Hedley's father, and through him the future Moslem came into contact with interesting folk even while a youngster.

Famous generals of the era bought their wines, hired their silver, and ordered their banquets from Churchward senior; noble lords and commoners prominent in Parliament and finance let the old gentleman organize their festivities. His culinary merits enabled him to see more of the nation's grandees than many society celebrities ever did. Wherever the caterer went Hedley kept him company. Queen Victoria herself got to know the little fellow who stood beside his papa whenever the latter called on Her Majesty for confidential gastronomic instructions. Among the many yarns which Hedley had to tell was one concerning the royal lady's secret preference for plaice, considered a very "ungenteel" fish in the middle of the nineteenth century. Before each of the great military reviews the caterer received private orders from his sovereign to disguise this delicacy by skinning it and adding misleading trimmings lest loyal subjects should think Her Majesty's tastes were not queenly.

Another historic figure of whom the boy saw a good deal was the Empress Eugénie of France, whose mansion, Farnborough, lay only a few miles from the Churchwards' house. While his father happened to be riding across country a fine little terrier ran after the horse

and followed it home. Hedley and the other children fell in love with the friendly animal and not knowing whence it came, they adopted it as their pet. Weeks later the Empress's butler, meeting the caterer on business, discovered that the new dog belonged to his mistress, to whom it had been given by some member of the British royal family. But her Majesty found out how much the youngsters had taken it to their hearts, and she insisted on letting them keep the terrier.

Through these and similar connections Hedley Churchward came to know the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, the world's wealthiest woman in Victorian times. Among other hobbies the millionairess had a fondness for match-making, at which she showed great talent. In the opinion of the Baroness a certain schoolmaster and a certain schoolmistress of her acquaintance appeared specially suited to each other. So she arranged an introduction and told the couple that if they married she would found an academy for them. Their wedding was duly celebrated, and a heavily-endowed college at Kilburn, near London, came into existence. Owing to the Baroness's influence in society dozens of her friends, including many unusual people, sent their boys to study there. Hedley Churchward was one of the pupils, and in the staid suburban schoolhouse he shared lollipops with the sons of South American presidents, of Indian generals, of big-game hunters, Polar explorers and professional empire builders.

A very human youngster he proved to be. At the age of ten an old gentleman gave him a genuine Post

Office Mauritius stamp. This treasure, to-day worth over £3,000, he exchanged for a breeding cage of white mice!

Like a fairy godmother, the Baroness Burdett-Coutts supervised the well-being of Kilburn College, asking its scholars to her mansion for tea, rewarding the good boys (including Hedley) with presents of Bibles, lecturing those who failed to gain their head master's favour, planning careers for all who revealed special talent.

During a holiday at Aldershot, Hedley and some other lads noticed the numerous idle Tommies who lounged outside the barracks and canteens of its rural streets. To supply these soldiers with amusements and, incidentally, to make some money for themselves, they built a wooden theatre, for which young Churchward prepared the scenery. The tiny playhouse became such a success that all the neighbourhood, military and civilian, thronged its plank benches, and the enterprising school-boys sold out to a grown-up manager at what to them was an enormous price.

Details of this little adventure reached the Baroness Burdett-Coutts. She discovered that Hedley had been painting cloths for the Officers' Dramatic Club in his home town, and the sequel was that he went as a student to an art school in Kensington.

Sir Howard Elphinstone, a good friend of the then Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward), also heard about the gifted lad through the millionairess. While still in his early teens Hedley, thanks to this Court official, got an invitation to paint a drop-curtain for

the stage in the Sandringham drawing-room. The subject was: "Venice from the Grand Canal," and his royal employer felt so pleased that he wrote him a personal letter of thanks, which Churchward kept till he died.

With such commendations it was not difficult for the boy to become articled to one of the great scene-painters then living, Spong, of Sadler's Wells.

Queerly enough, Hedley's early theatrical adventures started in a haunted chapel filled with ancient graves. Julian Hicks, one of his "master-artist's" colleagues, used to paint there. Some sprightly apprentices tried to recover a skull for the grave-digger's scene in *Hamlet* from the tombs, but a long blue flame rose out of a leaden coffin, whereat they hastily desisted.

Besides letting him work in London, Spong took Churchward on provincial engagements. At the Grand Theatre, in Leeds, the pupil was busy for a good while preparing a *Mother Goose* pantomime. A tattered, bare-legged newsboy used to come from the streets into the paint-room where he earned some pence by helping the scenic artists. This popular little fellow also drew cartoons of the staff, for which they paid him a shilling apiece.

Churchward and his friends often said that some rich man ought to give the youngster a chance to study art.

Presently that opportunity did come and the boy left Leeds. His name was Phil May.

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During the ensuing years Hedley assisted in many historic productions. In 1881 he painted decorations for the original performance of *The Lights of London*. Some months later he was in daily contact with a bearded, cloaked, impetuous giant, Lord Tennyson, who came personally to superintend the staging of *The Promise of May*, at the Globe Theatre.

"You did those scenes excellently, my boy," the poet told Churchward, "would you like me to give you an autographed copy of the play?"

After the sensational first evening when a peer stood up among the audience and objected to the allegedly atheistic tone of the piece, Hedley received the book from Tennyson and the artist never parted with it again.

Edward, Prince of Wales, also seems to have taken a fancy to his Sandringham protégé. On seeing Churchward's mounting of the *Colleen Bawn*, he and the Princess sent him yet another letter of appreciation.

All through his life the painter retained a knack for living through unusual adventures. Churchward witnessed the famous incident at Sadler's Wells Theatre when the management ordered a madong-pot, a little metal vessel with a spirit lamp used for keeping gold leaf moist for the canvas. Mr. Spong drew a life-size sketch for the tinsmiths. To the amazement of the paint-room workers the making of the vessel lasted several weeks. Ultimately it did come. A pantechicon brought a pot—eighteen feet high! The manufacturers

had mistaken their instructions and, following previous usage, applied the life-size drawings on a scale of one inch to three feet.

While sketching a doorway in Beauchamp's Tower, at the Tower of London, for use as a stage background in *Dorothy*, a Beefeater arrested Churchward on a suspicion of Nihilism. The reason given for this act was that the artist wore an outlandish Inverness cape, and a fellow so clad had lately been caught carrying bombs. Not until one of the most eminent managers in the city guaranteed the artist's harmlessness was he released.

Dozens of theatrical notabilities knew the young man. Lily Langtry, Genevieve Ward, E. J. Odell, Hermann Vezin, Henry Irving and J. Brooks were among his friends. He served with the famous showman "Lord" George Sanger (whose Christian name was Lord), and was present when a lion got loose in the playhouse, chasing every employé and performer at a rehearsal into the most inaccessible sections of the stage machinery. He saw Lord Leighton painting scenery and John Everett Millais making a try but giving up the task because he did not know where to begin on a canvas seventy feet long and thirty feet wide.

Presently Hedley settled down at Drury Lane. Augustus Harris was still in his glory there at the time and for eleven consecutive years the future Moslein painted cloths for the great producer's pantomimes. Churchward always asserted that his art never again reached the achievements of the 'seventies when he started serious

work. Gaslight, he declared, threw none of the harsh shadows noticeable now that electric illumination is universal. One spectacular set in *Sinbad the Sailor* required no fewer than 4,000 lamps.

In Drury Lane Hedley saw an incident compared to which the most sensational film seems tame.

A luckless workman became marooned amid a ring of flames in the centre of a monstrous gas chandelier. It hung forty feet or more above the auditorium and while adjusting the lower flares the upper ones accidentally started to work. Luckily the scene-painter and some other employés were able to turn off the flares and lift the fainting victim out of his flaming prison.

The young artist had to complete his canvases in a building connected with the theatre by a drawbridge. This arrangement was enforced by Harris because a queer clause in his lease made all decorations prepared in Drury Lane the property of the landlords.

§

That friendly Bohemian life of the Thameside paint-rooms was to end in an unforeseen way. During the early 'eighties Churchward's "Master-Artist" took him on a holiday sketching trip across Spain. The two men studied the Alhambra, the cathedrals at Seville and at Còrdova and all the other grandeurs of the erstwhile Moorish towns.

Hedley felt fascinated as he had never yet been in his life. He pleaded with Spong to let him extend the

trek to Morocco, then still a veiled Oriental empire, without the motor roads, dockyards, hotels, etc., to be found yonder nowadays.

The youth had his way, and sailed across the Straits of Gibraltar. Alone, Churchward started to tramp and ride through the sunny desert towns. The fame of Robinson Crusoe drew him to Salé where the immortal islander spent his period of slavery. He the Moors found Hedley drawing pictures in the crooked streets, and patting the heads of children who came to stare over his shoulder. For this their parents neatly stoned him to death. Nevertheless the grave Eastern fanatics appealed to the Aldershot fellow, and they in their turn presently began to like the dignified, courteous Englishman. He did not patronise them; he respected, no, he admired their religion.

"He is enlightened by Allah," spoke the sheikhs.

Ultimately some of them led Churchward into the hills—to see the original cave of Ali Baba, and the guides proudly told him their ancestors were the famous Forty Robbers.

The Kaid Maclean, a Scotsman who became commander of the Sultan's household troops and one of the despot's intimates, met the travelling artist at Fez, where he gave him hospitality. He, too, felt that Hedley was a character out of the ordinary and told his guest much concerning his own absurdly adventurous career, which made the clansman from Argylshire the dignitary of an Oriental court. Maclean was still "a typical red-faced Highlander in his hearty bluntness," Churchward after-

wards related, "speaking Arabian with a strong Scotch accent."

Through his friendship with some native palace officials Hedley heard first-hand about the Sultan's courtship of a Glasgow barmaid. His Majesty wanted a wife from Europe for his harem. So he sent a delegation of wise counsellors to the nearest part of that continent, namely Gibraltar. The long-robed delegates strolled through the unfamiliar town and happened to look curiously in at the door of a military canteen. Behind the counter the Moors saw a strapping Clydeside girl serving drinks to the Tommies.

Realising that her style of beauty exactly suited their royal employer they called her out and forthwith proposed. Wide-eyed, the barmaid heard them explain this was a chance for her to become a Queen. She assented, provided that her mother, a Glasgow washer-woman, would be provided for.

Arrangements were duly made by cable. Notwithstanding all the pleas of the Gibraltar matrons, headed by the Governor's wife, the girl decided to marry His Majesty. She is believed to have become the mother of the present Sultan.

Churchward's holiday ended, and he regretfully went back to London town. But before many moons ran out neither Drury Lane nor Sadler's Wells nor any other place of entertainment could keep him away from Morocco.

This time he grew more intimate than ever with the natives. In the harbour of Rabat a French steamer

bringing home Mecca pilgrims from Arabia, lay anchored. While the passengers packed their luggage the white cook amused himself defiling the ritually prepared food of the Moslems. Again and again he pushed his finger into the basins that held their "kosher" rations, till furious Bedouins drew knives and began to surround the crew. Hedley Churchward happened to be present and interfered. In their own language, which he had been studying of late, he promised the Moors they would get justice, and then, applying his Kilburn College French, he gave the cook a "dressing down." This ended a very dangerous situation on the ship, and the pilgrims were beside themselves with gratitude. They carried Hedley bodily through the surf to the town, where he was lodged as a guest in the house of a prominent sheikh.

All the local notables called to thank him for his service to Islam. To entertain the Englishman his host gave a disconcerting demonstration of Oriental magic on the beach—causing himself to disappear in broad daylight from the sands into space.

As the years passed Hedley grew more and more immersed in the East, in the flat-roofed fairy-tale cities, where learned imams and frantic dervishes, veiled women, sorcerers and hakims kept alive the spirit of Haroun al Raschid's age. No longer did the artist trek through Tunis or Morocco in a lounge suit and a bowler hat. He wore the silver-banded head-dress and white robes of a Bedouin. At the studio in Drury Lane he was Mr. Hedley Churchward. In North Africa, amid

the camps and townlets of the Arabs, he was greeted as Mahmoud the Fortunate.

One day he told his kinsfolk at Aldershot that he had become a Moslem.

To the burgesses of an English country town the idea that a man from their own quiet streets should genuinely reverence Mahomet and obey the Koran seemed too strange for belief. Yet there was Hedley saying the five prescribed daily prayers, wearing a golf cap so that his forehead could touch the ground as he bowed before Allah, giving to the poor, washing his forearms, fasting and regulating his whole life according to the usages of Islam.

No one who knew Churchward could doubt that he sincerely believed his religion was the best. At mosque and in private life, in Christian company or among his fellow-believers he always held to his creed, never aggressively, never with any wish to convert, but feeling a hearty anger about those who perverted or wrongly expressed the Koran's teaching.

For a scene-painter North Africa, however, offered no opportunities. So in 1888 he took an engagement with the celebrated Australian theatrical partnership, Robert Brough and Dion Boucicault. His talent for getting into unusual company remained manifest even in Melbourne, Adelaide and the other Southern cities where he worked.

He chummed with the "Smallest man in the World" (twenty inches high) and heard the latter express his annoyance at being given children's knives and forks at

Warley's Hotel, in Sydney. At this queer establishment Churchward counted as a privileged visitor. Mr. Solomon, an enterprising imitator of the illustrious Phineas T. Barnum, had established an exhibition of monstrosities in the town. To keep them out of the public eye after the performances all the human freaks were quartered in a special wing of the hostelry, and Hedley, who advised the showman about his stage decorations, was one of the few outsiders permitted to enter. Many a time he could be seen gravely discussing politics with Jo-Jo, the Dog-Faced Boy, taking off his hat as the India-Rubber Lady passed or giving a courteous bow to the Living Skeleton.

In the clubs the artist again met Phil May, now a world celebrity, Robert Louis Stevenson, over on a visit from Samoa, and a touchy naval commander who ordered his gunners to fire a blank salvo at a party of picnickers on the foreshore of Sydney Bay because they had put up the Royal Standard over their lunch-baskets.

Churchward could tell about the poisonous Fiji Island snake which got into some dead banana leaves used on the stage at Brisbane, where it terrorised the players. The unlucky powers of his opal ornaments, the manner in which he escaped drowning by remaining on a shipwrecked vessel—all provided subjects for unusual tales of his Australian life.

§

But Hedley was fated to wander even farther. After the lapse of five years he could no longer withstand his craving for the Orient. This time he explored Egypt. A Cairo congregation asked him to decorate its new mosque. His graceful work delighted the elders, who paid him great honour. The artist decided to stay in the fascinating town, not so much on account of its picturesqueness as of its congenial Mahomedan life.

For a while he abandoned scene-painting and became an Egyptian citizen, a moustached figure in a red fez and dressed like the natives who lived in the Arab quarter of Cairo.

It took him time to understand many of the subtly obscure local customs. Thus in the early stage of his orientalization Churchward caused a painful commotion at a banquet by declining to eat from the principal dish because he felt unwell. With a grim face the host ordered the servants to take it away. Only later did a friend whisper to Mahmoud that as the chief it was necessary for him to touch the food ere his companions could eat.

Soon enough, however, Hedley grew thoroughly versed in all such points of decorum. Little boys just about to be married, often called to ask him to their weddings. Since these lads were nearly always complete strangers, the painter knew the only reason for their coming was the expectation of a present. A piastre or two invariably brought the promise that when Mahmoud Mobarek him-

self (might his footsteps be perfumed) took a wife, they would return the gift.

On the few occasions when he entered European company Churchward again became a cultured, highly-educated Englishman, whose deliberate, old-fashioned drawing-room manners could only have been learnt in the best society of his home country. But at Cairo he was nearly always among Mussulmen. He never went as a background spectator to the uncanny, unadvertised native ceremonies such as the khalifas, where religious enthusiasts hacked and stabbed themselves in honour of Allah without feeling any pain. Generally Churchward sat in the seat of honour. Thus he learnt what mistaken notions even learned Europeans frequently possess on the subject of Eastern life.

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The Great Pyramid of Gizeh impressed the artist so much that he decided to build himself a house in its shadow. Beneath a monstrous ridge of rubble, accumulated in the course of half a dozen civilisations, Mahmoud the Fortunate chose a site looking towards the Nile. Nobody before him had the enterprise to settle so near the mighty pharaonic structure. Save for the distant village of Koomer Slatar, the ground Churchward bought from the Egyptian Government lay surrounded by desert.

Having put his temporary tent there Hedley went for an evening swim in the river. When he came back

to the camp everything in it was gone. Bedouins had seen him from afar and thought he was an infidel.

No pasha could have found more assiduous help from the authorities than this English convert to Islam. Thirty inhabitants of Koomer Slatar were imprisoned by order of the angry magistrate, and the village fathers described the whereabouts of the luggage by means of a vision seen in a pool of ink.

The little boy who thus revealed the hiding place of the stolen trunks from what he saw in the black fluid poured on to his head mentioned a round flat object that rested on a folded shirt. Churchward pooh-poohed the description and said there never was anything of the kind in his luggage. But after the necromantic meeting had angrily dispersed, the Englishman suddenly recalled his golf-cap was indeed packed as the lad described and fitted his description, and rushed back to the ink-wizard's house. However, the spell of the latter had been broken, and the artist never recovered his personal effects.

To make up for the loss the Arabs determined to show some of their other supernatural gifts. So they begged Churchward to ask for any ancient Egyptian relic, no matter how unusual, and they would find it for him in the sands while he looked on. Hedley demanded a King's scarabæus of blue turquoise, and within an hour a youth brought him a charm of this kind.

Another unique piece of jewellery came into the painter's possession. At a stall in a Cairo bazaar he bought, for a big price, an ornament made of inlaid

blue turquoise whose beauty surpassed anything the East otherwise could offer. It was from the famous local workshop of Smeder the Silversmith, and by a fortunate accident the Englishman got to know Muscin, the craftman's brother. Sitting at ease amid the public hamam, or bath-house, where the latter carried on business, Hedley heard the strange fate of the only man who could make such mosaic work.

Smeder employed a fellow named Judah, whose profession it was to match gems for the Cairo jewellers. Having received an order to supply a great necklace of his special turquoise to the wife of a Khedival minister, the artist found his supplies of the precious stone were insufficient. So Smeder engaged Judah to obtain some for him. The latter mentioned this quest to Tulab, his ten-year-old son, and the boy told him he knew where huge quantities of the finest quality could be found.

The place proved to be the ruined Mosque of Sultan Ahmed, a decayed but magnificent building whose bronze doors were studded with turquoise. Notwithstanding the tradition that a curse attached to any man who used material taken from the structure, Smeder willingly accepted the jewels which Judah brought him. Artees, another professional alms-seeker, who had shadowed Tulab's father to the mosque, warned the silversmith, but Smeder would not listen. He made several trifles from the stone (of which Churchward obtained one) and started on the necklace for the minister's wife.

Before it was finished the curse of Sultan Ahmed came true. Husein, the bath-house keeper, one morning found his brother lying across his work-bench throttled by a silken rope. All the haskanics and detectives in Cairo failed to explain who had done it.

Commissions for the decorations at the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal dragged Hedley Churchward out of the Arabian Nights back to England.

On the journey he could not resist stopping at Gibraltar. With his paints and canvas the artist started sketching on the Rock. Unluckily, he put up the easel just outside the biggest gun in the fortress, known as "The Snake in the Grass." Before he drew a line some British soldiers arrested him as a spy.

Two Frenchmen had just before been caught hawking exquisite pastries below cost price to the troops. This awoke official curiosity and the generous strangers were searched. On their persons divers military plans had been stowed away and now the authorities considered Hedley another variety of secret service agent. When the management at Drury Lane cabled a reassuring testimonial to the painter's merits the commandant liberated him.

Wishing to visit Ceuta, on the African coast, Churchward thought it wise to secure a passport from the Spanish administration. He went to Algeciras and slept in an uncanny old inn where scores of travellers had been murdered for their money in the good old times. Mysterious hands appeared at the latch of his room door during the night and disagreeable, ferocious

Southerners peered in at intervals but then desisted from harming the "milord". Next day the chief burgess of the town cheered Hedley up with yarns about incinerated corpses recovered from the inn garden, and gave the traveller a passport signed "Governor of Gibraltar, stationed at Algeciras during the temporary British occupation."

Churchward's chief adventure in Morocco was his presence at a battle fought by the Sultan against a rebellious tribe in the mountains. Hedley took a trip to Fez and saw a carriage given by Queen Victoria to the ruler of the land being used as a summer-house in the palace grounds. Creepers and flowers overgrew the vehicle, which was carried to His Majesty's residence across the housetops because the city streets were too narrow.

No longer did Mahmoud feel at home in England, though his artistic success at the Ship Canal opening brought him the official thanks of the Lord Mayor and Councillors of Manchester. Hedley was treated shabbily by a firm which employed him, and the painter waited in a reputedly haunted house for better opportunities. To while away the time he started hunting ghosts. Weird front-door knocks of blood-curdling loudness used to scare the other inhabitants of the cottage every evening.

After some investigations, worthy of Sherlock Holmes Hedley traced the cause of the din. It was due to nobody but the scared people themselves. While they waited in the living-room for the spook their affrighted

movements accidentally set swinging a delicately-hung piece of loose woodwork over the porch that formed part of a whispering-gallery.

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Mr. Luscombe Searelle, a well-known South African theatre manager, learnt that Churchward was free from engagements, and he straightway offered him a retainer to work in his houses.

Shortly before the Jameson Raid, the painter sailed for Table Bay and started life on the Diamond Fields. Cecil Rhodes was all-powerful there at the time, and the great man took a liking to the whimsical scene-painter, who asked him for help.

Mahmoud the Fortunate had always felt interested in freak jewels. He owned strange specimens of rubies, emeralds, beryls, opals and other crystals. Being at Kimberley he wanted coloured diamonds. Rhodes presented him with a pink one, and left special orders at De Beers that Churchward should be given a chance of acquiring any available "fancy" gems.

For another pastime Hedley liked to hunt precious stones in the mines' discarded sorting heaps where he sometimes discovered specimens which less gifted searchers had overlooked. Following an oriental custom he had a whole number of choice jewels mounted round the outside of a beaded purse made in a Cairo harem.

But perhaps the oddest of all his pastimes was the breeding of chameleons, which could be seen in all parts of his house.

Just before Kimberley was besieged in the Boer War Churchward took part in the buying of the valuable stage curtain at the local theatre. It was not a useless precaution, for later on a shell from the Republican guns crashed through the flies.

After the painter removed to Johannesburg, Barney Barnato, Carl Hanau and other millionaires became his picturesque patrons. The former once planned to erect a theatre with the deepest stage in the world, on the site of the present Carlton Hotel, but was dissuaded by Hedley, who proved to him that a building with an actor's platform one hundred and fifty feet from front to back, would, on the proposed ground, become a kind of tunnel. Paul Kruger felt puzzled about this English Moslem but displayed no objection against his wish to found a mosque on the Witwatersrand. To Hedley's other scheme of holding an international exhibition there he gave the most emphatic encouragement. The outbreak of hostilities in 1899 sent the idea into limbo for nearly thirty years.

Amongst his varied duties at Johannesburg Churchward once had to tie fast with ropes the roof of a pioneer theatre to prevent it caving in till a performance was over. On another occasion local Mahomedans deputed him to stop a painstaking producer from offending religious feeling by using real Arabic prayer-calls in the minaret-scene of an Eastern play.

He vainly tried to stop an exuberant comedian from throwing a valuable rough diamond out of the theatre window during a performance, and he helped the dis-



THE HOUSE

Hedley Clair howled at the darkness
in knowledge of the dark.

THE HOUSE OF THE FLOOD

During his lifetime Mahomet cursed the house, calling it a house
of evil spirits. Since then it has stood abandoned, a house
sometimes by the bolder Meccan children, *shaytan* is the word
Satanic noises and blue flames enigmata to the stars.

concerted jester to look for it among the stage rubbish after he realized it was genuine.

During the Boer War he secretly met Von Veldheim, the man who in 1896 shot the millionaire, Wolf Joel, and who was subsequently deported from South Africa. Though the fact has never before been revealed, this celebrated condottiere effected a mysterious return to the Cape about 1902.

Even the exciting diggings could not keep Mahmoud too long. He went back to London, looked up the old folks at Drury Lane and set forth anew for Egypt. His house below the great Pyramid had meanwhile been built according to the typical architecture of the land. Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward decided to settle down. Strictly according to the old-fashioned Moslem rules he wooed the daughter of a highly-placed Cairo priest. Not long after this century began they married.

To add a final touch of peril and devoutness to his life the scene-painter undertook the Mecca pilgrimage.

§

Arminius Vambery, the great Hungarian Orientalist and explorer, wrote on a certain occasion: "It may well be said that Christian travellers like Burchardt, Burton, Maltzahn and others have exhausted the subject relating to the Holy Places of Islam, but a Mahomedan sees more and better than any foreigner."

Here was a Moslem, an educated Englishman, who could study the most sacred objects and ceremonies

without the slightest need of hiding his identity. He was not obliged to keep secrets, he required no reserve or circumspection when talking with fanatics. Notwithstanding all the Arabic learning, all the efficient disguises and preparations of other Western visitors they were always haunted by the nightmarish fancy: "What if I am discovered?" When Hedley Churchward's European origin was revealed it only brought him increased honour and hospitality.

What is more, Mahmoud Mobarck, unlike all the travellers before or after him, was an artist, and could set down with his brush and pencil those unrecorded sights he came upon.

In looking at the dainty drawings which perhaps constitute the most valuable souvenir of his pilgrimage, one will notice that the figures are rather roughly indicated. This has a religious reason. As a Mussulman, Hedley Churchward was not supposed to portray living creatures (the taboo caused the evolution of the arabesques appearing on Eastern carpets). Though his profession as a scene-painter barred him from strict obedience to this command of the Prophet he strove to avoid putting men and animals on his sketches. Even the demerits of Mahmoud's work are of interest.

As a pilgrim he drew much attention in Mecca. Preachers, muezzins, mulvis and other Oriental ecclesiastics at Johannesburg mosques praised his piety and learning as a Haji to me. The official passport from the Cadi of Egypt and the relics he obtained at the

Kaaba are among Churchward's many interesting heirlooms.

For my benefit Mahmoud one afternoon put on the original Eastern robes he wore at the Holy City. They were of great gorgeousness, the Bedouin headdress shining with green, red and numerous other colours, closely interwoven with silver. Without the slightest self-consciousness he took a stroll down a Johannesburg street in this garb in full sight of a gang of amazed little boys playing outside neighbouring suburban villas.

§

The old pilgrim from Aldershot now rests among the bowers of Paradise. His life of struggle and excitement, of intercourse with white celebrities and desert chiefs, with Sybil Thorndike and the Emir Feisal, with George Robey and the Cadi of Egypt, with Queen Victoria and the Sheikh of Zamzam has ended.

Just before his sudden death, which came to him as he stood at work beside his beloved paint frames, I succeeded in completing the following record of Churchward's most romantic Eastern enterprise. In the course of many conversations, bubbling over with quaint digressions, the scenic-artist told me the story. His arrival always brought with it a vista of that wondrous territory where jinns and rocs are not *quite* impossible.

In setting down Hedley Churchward's adventures I have tried as much as possible to use the old gentle-

man's own words and to put into a coherent tale the haphazard facts which came out in ordinary talk. There was nothing eccentric or abnormal about the pilgrim. It was this self-possessed, serene, religious attitude which gave uniqueness to his account of the trail that stretched "From Drury Lane to Mecca."

PART TWO

THE PILGRIMAGE

CHAPTER I

I BECOME A MOSLEM DIVINITY STUDENT

WHEN the year 1908 arrived I still lived outside Cairo, feeling most thoroughly orientalised. I was a particularly orthodox Moslem. My wife and all her people belonged to eminent Egyptian families and I hardly ever found chances of speaking the tongue I learned from my mother at Aldershot so many years before. In the suburban village of Koomer Slatar, where I dwelt, the fellahin called me the oldest citizen, while my house, standing beside the base of Cheops' monstrous Pyramid, interested European tourists as a specimen of the better class native residence. More than once neighbours respectfully asked me to conduct their prayers as an unofficial Imam when the professional preachers visited other settlements along the Nile banks.

To the devout peasants and Bedouins who listened, my discourses may have been useful, but this experience in the holding of services showed me that I was not yet as learned in the Koran as I wanted to be.

Hence I became a student at Azhar. Few non-Moslems are aware that this college is one of the largest

educational establishments in all the world. No fewer than ten thousand students from every Islamic country — from Malaya, the Cape of Good Hope, Afghanistan and Anatolia, Turkestan and Ceylon, Zanzibar and Nigeria, attend here in order to qualify as preaching oracles or ordinary scholars.

Among religious universities, Ashar, whose Arabic name signifies "The Splendid," is without the greatest in any Continent, and I felt it would be wrong for me to have lived in Cairo without enjoying the privileges of tuition yonder.

From Koomer Slatar I went by train through Egypt's tangled, fantastic, crowded capital in order to enrol as a student. My personal dragoman, El Isack, came with me, and during our ride an incident happened which showed abruptly I was not yet quite as Oriental as I fancied. For years my clothes had been the wide, broad-folded robes of a Bedouin and round my head I wore the silvery band which holds their peculiar cap in place.

While the suburban train rolled past the Nile toward town a pair of European ladies, blatantly tourists, started talking in English.

"My dear," spoke the older passenger (pointing at me), "could he not pass for a Britisher?"

"Quite true," answered the girl with her. "I think he is rather like Cousin Henry; on looking at him one would hardly take the fellow for an Arab."

In the Egyptian dialect I muttered a hint to my servant that he must take no notice. Just as a

descended near the terminus the supposed aborigine turned to his companion and in the broadest British idiom at his disposal said "Come, Embarek, get ready."

At Azhar, however, the uncommon tint of my skin, and fairness of my hair brought remarkably little comment. I went into the enormous, rambling array of cloistered buildings, and after striding through perplexing courtyards and passages across which droned the sound of many scholars at their lessons, I met some religious officials who told me which masters might be ready to accept an additional pupil.

Formalities about registration, matriculation or initiation as a "fresher," never held up my entry into the shady, marble-adorned lecture rooms that belong to the college.

For each of the three subjects taken by students: the correct reading of the Koran, scholarly exposition of the same Holy Book and finally the making of original commentaries thereon, I picked the best available tutor, and without delay started attending lectures.

Every morning I rode into town where, during the first weeks, I had to be careful not to mistake the class rooms.

Azhar was a wilderness of quadrangles and alleyways. In themselves the buildings (all single-storeyed) looked very simple, having coats of whitewash and little ornament, but they included lecture-halls as well as living quarters for students and were peopled with multitudes in the most unbelievable assortments of gowns, coats, sashes, turbans, fezzes, and amulet-

pouches tucked in round loincloths. Children of six or seven years counted as their fellow pupils, boys possessing white beards.

No end appeared to the vastness of faces one saw while walking through the college. Ten thousand students in a single nucleus of habitation. Unless you have beheld such a crowd together, my description cannot enough emphasise how numerous were the little groups under the verandah and amid the court yards clustering about the various master. For hours I have walked up and down among the Koran students at their lessons and still discovered class after class stretching in front of me, each one giving access of further hundreds. Azhar is like those buildings one sometimes visualises in nightmares, along whose corridors the dreamer walks innumerable miles without finding the front door.

Let me tell about an average lesson.

Wherever I came I found men squatting next to lecture-hall entrances keeping watch over multitudes of shoes and slippers. As everywhere in the East it was a sign of ill-breeding to bring filth from the highway into a roofed building.

Outside the place where my tutor for the day held his discourse I always doffed my footgear and handed it to one of these wardens.

The vaulted room I entered was cool and almost empty.

Save for numerous little collapsible Koran stands it held no furniture. Book-rests had to be used because

the Prophet's decree forbids Believers to lay sacred writings on so ignoble a place as a floor.

Several men who belonged to my class politely made way for the "Sheikh" (thus they called me). In Egypt the title is not only given to Bedouin leaders, but to many persons of consequence, and in my case it would, of course, only be used out of courtesy.

We sat waiting on the flag-stones, cross-legged and fairly silent, since we were an elderly, dignified company. From other halls I heard the incessant hum of many thousand students chanting Koran Arabic, a beautiful language, quite unlike the everyday dialects spoken in Egypt, Yemen or Syria. While learning about the Holy Book one may use nothing else. Ordinary speech differs from it in the same sense that Yiddish does from the stately original Hebrew. One especial chant remained everlastingly distinguishable.

This was the sing-song of the Fatiah or "Confession of Faith" with which every lesson must start. As classes were constantly assembling and dispersing it became almost impossible to notice a break in the intonation of this, the first and most important chapter of the Koran.

Some of my fellow-students proved to be the grown-up sons of Chiefs inhabiting the Sudan Deserts, others religious enthusiasts born in Upper Egypt, Morocco and Abyssinia. Most of them had travelled vast mile-ages from their homes and expected to hear nothing about their kin for many months.

A dignified Arab presently walked into the hall.

This might be Habib, Hussain or one of the other instructors. Like us, he came barefoot and in a white gown. "Bismillah! Salam Aleikam," (Peace to All), spoke the learned man.

His class rose and answered, "Aleikam Salam," (To all be Peace).

Now we, too, chorused the Fatiah, and let the illuminated pages of Korans flutter as we found the Sura on which we were busy.

In long melodious wails the words of the text rolled out. Each man took a turn at the reading and thereafter our teacher explained the text, phrase by phrase, and with innumerable references to commentators, many of whom died a thousand years ago. Although I had learnt its contents twenty years before, during my conversion to Islam, Habib showed particular care in letting me understand the Fatiah correctly. He "coached" me in it before touching anything else.

Definite time-tables were used at college. My morning lecture started at 10 o'clock and lasted one hour; I took another during the afternoon from two to three. On Fridays Azhar remained closed so that the Faithful might all attend Mosque, but steady work continued throughout the Christian Sunday.

Moslem learning principally consists in the correct memorisation and expounding of the Koran; until one can recite its whole text without reference to the book there is no necessity for any pupil, no matter what his age, to depart from the college. Many folk pass their entire lives as Azhar students.

"Surely nobody can learn by heart a volume almost as long as the Bible?" the Occidental citizen may declare. Yet on my life I have met several sages who could thus repeat any and every passage of the Book. They attained the title of Hafiz, one of the most honourable in all Islam. At Cape Town, the Imam Abdul Mallik, a well-known Malay Priest, owns it.

I, of course, never possessed such learning. In all, I knew by heart twelve chapters and these I still pride myself on remembering. Throughout the tuition my Arabic knowledge grew immensely, and I had the pleasure of hearing repeated commendation from the lecturers.

In some respects the spirit at Azhar resembled that of Western Universities. For instance, there was no reason why a man should not absent himself from a class without leave. On the other hand the Professors often took the liberty of giving lax students reprimands. A fellow who came late would greet the tutor with the usual salaam as he hurried in and took his place. If he was a "habitual criminal," the tutor gave the offender an outspoken "dressing down."

In the lower classes, which were chiefly attended by small boys, the teachers kept canes in the folds of their robes, and judging by the frequency of wailings, these instruments must have been fairly often used. The youngsters—rowdy, wide-awake, little youths—could not read the Koran, but the "Juiké Halmer" a kind of Primer containing extracts from the main Book in

small and easy chapters printed above them on correct pronunciation.

Between age and youth a great distinction was made, and lads felt most chary about taking liberties with the seniors. Elsewhere, however, the fundamental democracy of Islam remained evident; riches or influence gave no privileges, while any pauper might come and be taught for nothing. Notwithstanding the desirability of having one's own Koran, the Azhar library was ready to supply books gratis to all who needed them.

The Imams were not paid, but students on leaving usually made them a present. Money was much preferred as a gift, and custom required it to be wrapped in paper. In theory not the cash but the paper into which a coin has accidentally been folded was given.

Throughout my course I followed up in English at home what I read in the Koran at the college; for this purpose I used Sale's translation, and often astonished my tutors by an apt bit of cribbing from the contents of that work. In Azhar this does not constitute an offence, because that institution lacks the worst feature of all universities, namely examinations.

For two fascinating years I remained a student, leaving my lodgings as regularly as any undergraduate in Oxford and perchance giving even greater attention to the words of my instructors than such an English youth would do. Of the sprightly nonsense which characterises college fellows elsewhere, nothing existed

I BECOME MOSLEM DIVINITY STUDENT 39

here. Courteous and full of assurance, my colleagues came and went. Their ages lay between twenty-five and forty and most of them were married. In later years I met a goodly number of "Old Boys" throughout the Moslem World, but I am afraid the Oriental does not think as sentimentally of his Alma Mater as the traditions of the West demand.

CHAPTER II

I GET LEAVE TO VISIT MECCA

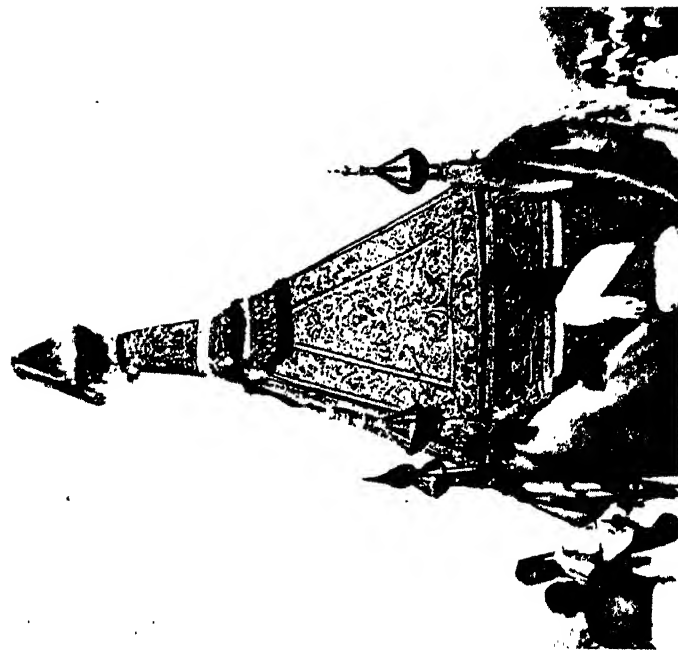
BEING in one of Islam's focal centres, I was surrounded by Hajis, men bearing the title which only those who have been to Mecca may legally possess. At the customary time, after the month of Ramadan, I regularly saw gigantic crowds of Pilgrims trodding forth from Cairo. Shouting and chanting Koran verses they strode to the railway stations, whence packed trains took them towards the steamer-quays of Suez and Port Said. Every year I was invited to see the solemn despatching of the Holy Carpet, which the Khedive of Egypt in those days supplied as a covering for the Holiest Place amid Mahomet's City. Its shaggy palanquin, wrapped in velvet that bore religious texts, was taken through the tall-walled, crooked streets. I stood among the tens of thousands who pushed and struggled to accompany the carefully-folded and very beautiful wrapper which for generations had been woven by a privileged family living beside the Nile.

Men spoke and thought even more than ordinarily about Mecca during such seasons, and my studies in the halls of Azhar emphasised the need for a pilgrimage to that town.



FRAGMENTS FROM THE HOLY CARPET

Part of the Arabic devices worked in gold lettering can be seen. When the new carpet arrives the old one is cut up and the pieces distributed.



BREINGING IN THE HOLY CARPET

Inside this gorgeous wrapper the sacred carpet which covers the entire Kacbo temple is each year carried to Mecca. The exterior of the litter is adorned with embroidered Arabic texts

So one evening as I strode along the looming Pyramid in the sunset and saw the jagged skyline of Cairo behind the dreamy African dusk, I decided to carry through what I had intended to do ever since I turned a Moslem—I would go to the Kaaba at Mecca.

Presently it came to me that Mahmoud Churchward, a typical blond Englishman, might, for all his orthodoxy, discover difficulties while trying to reach the most carefully guarded city in the world. I had read about Burton's visit, and also accounts of the less famous ones made by Burchardt and Von Maltzahn. But these men, in getting there, merely relied on careful disguise and exhaustive knowledge of Arab customs.

Hardly one European in history had visited Mecca as a genuine Mahomedan Pilgrim.

This uniqueness of my proposed venture did not repel me; on the contrary, I confess it became a definite attraction. However, I decided to do nothing injudicious, and above all to show in the manner of my coming the greatest possible amount of good faith.

The first thing I did was to tell several influential Egyptian friends about the plan.

Koomer Slatar, my village, belonged to the Magistracy of Gizeh, an unpretentious town on the side of the Nile opposite Cairo. Wearing my white gown I set out across the sand and mud flats, where the peasants grow their durrha, towards this settlement, known everywhere through the Great Pyramid which takes its name therefrom. Passing along many sunny streets where naked children romped, and veiled women stirred at

their pots and pans, I found a big block of Government offices and, having asked for the Mouderieh or magistrate himself, his clerk led me down the colonnades into a room where sat a native Egyptian civil servant, in stately robes and a fez.

Evidently he had heard about Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward for he showed little perplexity about my request for a permit to make a pilgrimage.

"Send me an application, signed by the Chief Citizens of Koomer Slatar," he advised, "and I will get you an interview with the Cadi of Egypt."

This promise pleased me greatly, since the ecclesiastic mentioned ranked among the senior dignitaries of all Islam. His protection would be immensely useful to any Mahomedan, but most particularly to myself. I thanked the Mouderieh very much and then saw him turn again towards his papers and telephone. He must have used the latter instrument very soon because on the following day *Moyeid*, a prominent Cairo newspaper, contained a paragraph about the Englishman who was about to visit Mecca.

Meanwhile, I spoke to my neighbours, and as I kept on good terms with them all, the desired recommendation from the leading burgesses was soon obtained. Later the Mouderieh sent a message that the Cadi of Egypt would, on a certain morning, be ready to see me. He reported I would have to pass an examination in the Faith, and that it was chiefly for this purpose the meeting would take place.

As befits men about to visit important officials I put

on my best robe when I again trekked to Gizeh. From some friends in the crowd I learnt the great man had been tempted to come out in order to see such an unusual applicant for a passport.

Considerable numbers of "Koomer Slatarians" showed their brown faces in the crowd which collected about the yard of the large Courthouse. Priestly and secular officials in turbans or tarbushes hurried up and down the cloisters and one of these took me into the principal hall. Though the morning was young, heat of typical Egyptian intensity hung over the land and I only hoped that it would not cause my knowledge of Eastern things to evaporate. Numbers of those who made way for me called "Good Luck."

The large, vaulted court-room appeared pleasantly shady after my cross-country walk. Amid its darkness I gradually saw a raised platform akin to an English judicial bench, and on this several bearded Orientals in richly coloured clothes squatted cross-legged. During the preliminary chatter several of them were pointed out to me. On the left reclined the Imam of the Mosque of Mohammed Ali, the greatest in Egypt, the famous temple-citadel, in which the Mamelukes were slaughtered, and within which lay the largest carpet in the world, a prayer-mat costing £5,000. Next to him waited another venerable priest of even greater standing. He happened to be visiting Cairo at the moment and having heard about the strange function due to start, came across the Nile to listen. This was the Sheikh-ul-Islam, of Constantinople, who among the Mahomedan

clergy takes a position equivalent to that of a Cardinal in Catholicism. Several other outstanding imams sat upon the Divan, and in the centre of the group I now saw the Cadi of Egypt himself.

The stately company seemed taken from the Arabian Nights, as did the grave squatting men who lined the floor in the public part of the Court. Unfortunately for romance, two shorthand writers sat beside a table. With their pencils and note-books these bored-looking Egyptians might have been trained at Bow Street.

"Bismillah," I called to the tribunal when it noticed me. "Salaam Aleikam," boomed the hoarse voices of the sages. Together we, examiners and candidate, recited the Confession of Faith, in reverence to Allah. I sat down and a polite man approached me, who said that he was an interpreter and would help if any linguistic difficulty arose. This proved no unreasonable precaution, for the priests proudly used their pure Koran Arabic, which is by no means easy to understand. Nevertheless, I did not need my friend more than once or twice in the course of the four hours during which I passed through the examination.

Only the Cadi actually asked the questions. He began by saying: "What are the Five Pillars (Essential Points) of Islam?" I enumerated those propositions which the Prophet set out as the fundamentals in our Faith:

"Ashadour Allah Illah wa ashadour Mahommed rasullah.

Karma Salla.

Ta zakht.

Som Ramadan.

Haj el beit maistakar illa sebilla."

(I believe in one God and only God and Mahomet is His Prophet.

Five prayers a day.

To give to the poor.

To keep Ramadan.

Make a Pilgrimage to Mecca if you can.)

Thereupon the Cadi reached for a luxuriously bound Koran. Opening the illuminated pages he asked me to construe several fairly difficult chapters and to explain the meaning of some obscure maxims. From this we passed to an interrogation concerning points of law: "What must happen in such and such cases in connection with inheritance, the property of married people, the duties of a master to his slave?"

All the while I saw the other learned men watching me with shrewd dark eyes, never speaking a word either to me or to each other. For me, the candidate in front of the divan, it was slightly puzzling, because I had no idea whether my examiners felt pleased or dissatisfied with the replies. I kept up my answers, however, and was glad to find that Labib, Hussein, etc., had not been teaching me uselessly.

The morning ran on till noon and still the questions came. Now and then my interpreter friend put in a slight explanation.

Then the Cadi closed the volume and raised one hand. "It is enough," he said.

As excitedly as any matriculation candidate awaiting the results of that ordeal I listened for the finding. It came swiftly.

"Thank you, my Brother in Islam," continued the examiner, "you are free to go throughout the Moslem World."

He stood up and embraced me. Of a sudden the whole tribunal became the embodiment of cordiality. One old Sheikh after another hurried to place his arms affectionately over my shoulders and to kiss me as a kinsman. Mutterings at the back of the court showed that the general delight had spread even there. Brown-legged men ran in various directions calling through the building: "He has passed." When I rode back to Koomer Slatar a crowd followed as a retinue, and at the village it grew evident that everybody already knew about Mobarek's success.

In the entrance of my whitewashed home I found an array of Bedouin dignitaries carrying sugary cakes and numerous fatty little sweetmeats. Embarek, my servant, told me he had commanded his relations to show their rejoicing thus. I spent the day receiving visitors who wanted to wish me good fortune, and I lay on my walled bedstead that evening feeling as contented as ever I was in life.

Early next day the dragoman woke me and said: "Some important folk have arrived."



A TYPICAL PILGRIM SNAPPED IN THE STREET

A very common error, existing even in the illustrations to Burton's "Arabian Nights", is the tendency of European artists to show Orientals with long tangled beards. This, for Mohammedans, is definitely forbidden in the Koran. The photo shows the standard length permitted.



A RELIGIOUS PASSPORT TO VISIT MECCA

This beautiful, illuminated paper is signed by the Cadi of Egypt and other Moslem notables. It authorised Hedley Churchward to travel in safety to Mecca.

Going into the courtyard I met an Egyptian military lieutenant, garbed neatly in a tunic and fez. Behind him, at attention, waited two soldiers.

"Good day, Effendi," spoke the officer, saluting. "I come from the Cadi of Egypt and the Government." Herewith he handed over a large sealed envelope for which a receipt was demanded. Stepping out of the sunlight I carefully opened it and was immensely delighted when I pulled out a beautifully-written document, which began where Englishmen would look for the last page. The paper constituted a passport, written, not printed in Koran Arabic, and it authorised me, not merely to visit Mecca, but any sacred shrine or building in the whole of Islam. To the bottom of the left page clung several green seals on which I could read reproductions of the signatures of the Cadi of Egypt, of the Sheikh-ul-Islam and nearly all the worthies who had been present at my examination.

While I studied the text I gradually realized that my hand held a document, the like of which had probably never been issued to any European before. I put it away most cautiously and am glad to say it is still in my possession.

As far as legal obstacles were concerned I, therefore, became free to enter Mecca or any other town but unfortunately another and very serious trouble faced me. During my studies at Azhar I had used up most of my savings and I could not obtain work as a scene-painter in Cairo where there was (and probably still is) scant chance of applying my art. Soon after the arrival

of the passport from the religious authorities I found out the less pleasant fact that I was very "hard up." Despite my good standing in the Moslem community the outlook undoubtedly appeared doleful, and I realized the journey to Mecca would have to be postponed for the time being. I started to seek a position away from the theatres and found it in a peculiar way.

Some casual remark made me tell a few Egyptian friends about an incident which happened to me in South Africa years before.

Although I wore an European suit when at Cape Town I had the habit sometimes of putting on a Moroccan fez with a long black tassel. While wearing this I once went into a fashionable café fronting Adderley Street, the city's main highroad, and felt astonished when a waitress said that she could not serve me owing to my headgear, even though I was a white man.

In consequence of the subsequent conversation at Cairo I wrote a little essay on this phase of European prejudice and showed it to a friend of mine named Labib (not the Azhar lecturer but a master at a fashionable Egyptian educational foundation called the School of Cadis). He read it with surprise and then commented: "Mahmoud, this would be good for *Moyeid*" (the chief daily newspaper in Cairo, which had issued the news about my pilgrimage scheme). The young man suggested I should show my writings to Sheikh Ali Jussuf, the editor of the journal. "It would be a good opportunity," added Labib, "for you to get introduced to him."

In those days the sheikh counted as the leading man in Egypt, being Prime Minister to the Khedive himself and of course I was keen to make use of Labib's suggestion. We went into Cairo's business district and found a big, characteristically Western newspaper building with janitors inside and vendors on the pavement without, waiting for the various editions. Upstairs, however, the Everlasting East came out. I saw Levantine printers' devils and compositors in flowing gowns carrying proof-sheets, and when we finally came upon the editor himself, I faced a middle-aged gentleman, with a slight beard, thin and very tall, sitting on a cushioned floor in front of a typewriter. Ali Jussuf was known to be very orthodox. Even in business hours he kept on gorgeous silk robes and a turban that partly covered a tarbush.

With much courtesy he saluted the intending contributor, offered him a divan, and ordered coffee which a coloured servant immediately brought in. While we were sipping the delicate Mocha I looked through the window on to palms and Eastern roofs, yet between our talk, I could hear the regular rumble of great presses, pounding out papers in the basement, and workmen in Oriental garments brought in proofs for the editor to sign.

Puckering together his nervy forehead he asked Labib in Arabic to translate my article from the English manuscript. The schoolmaster did so and the sheikh carefully listened. Then he said: "If this story is true I shall cable the Cape Prime Minister." I was rather

surprised at the importance he attached to the incident, but realised that in a political capacity he felt most jealous of Moslem dignity. Evidently the sheikh thought it a matter for the attention of the Prime Minister and not in the first instance the journalist. We said goodbye and he kept the contribution. While Labib and I walked out he called after us "Come again, my friends."

Within two days *Moyeid* appeared, containing a signed Arabic version of my article. I learned that Sheikh Ali Jussuf had decided not to cable the Cape authorities direct but first to address the Colonial Secretary in London, the Marquis of Crewe. From this diplomat an answer arrived referring the Egyptian Premier to Mr. Merriman, who at the moment headed the Cape Cabinet. South Africa's statesman wired: "Regret to say such incidents occur." All these messages were printed in a footnote to my story.

Though the whole protest brought no results, it proved successful as a newspaper stunt and, above all, made me well-known in Cairo. The good effect was heightened a little later when, after the termination of the fasting month of Ramadan, Sheikh Ali Jussuf invited me to a so-called "Khalifa dinner." This festive banquet is given to emphasise the conclusion of the gloomy period. Numerous Mahomedan intellectuals had been asked to the Premier's mansion with its Oriental garden. In a large hall we sat, not on divans, but on chairs at ornamented tables. Before the beginning of the feast our hands were washed by servants who carried round brass ewers and basins. With small

scented serviettes we dried ourselves and then set to on many rich dishes served ready cut and without knives.

Altogether the guests behaved in a cordial manner. The Premier did me the honour of asking for more articles, and the money which I received for these proved most handy in view of existing financial worries.

In my absence Sheikh Ali Jussuf met Labib saying he wanted some details about my life at the Pyramids. Amongst other things the schoolmaster told him I was a strict Moslem and had acted as Imam in the village.

"So he knows the religion *well*?" inquired the editor.

"Most certainly," answered Labib, "and what is more, he is very sorry that he must leave Egypt, where he cannot make a living."

To this the Sheikh answered, "If that is so, I will ask the Khedive to give him a position."

Labib told me this and of course I became very cheerful. A week later I heard what happened when the Premier interviewed his sovereign. These were the exact words used by Mahomed Tewfik who was noted for his friendly feelings to my race:

"What?—An Englishman?—Do anything for an Englishman?—I would rather wring his neck."

The Sheikh sent for me at his office and when I sat in that cushioned room again he explained. "The only power I have got is in respect of posts at the School of Cadis. If you are prepared to work there I can get you a place."

Having learnt that my qualifications were ample, I accepted and within a day began work in this establishment, which lay amid Cairo's fashionable suburb, Zaina Zadeb, called after a famous mosque where the Prophet's grand-daughter lies buried. It was yet another of the big cloistered buildings to which I had become accustomed since living in the East, a pleasant establishment, fringed with gardens and large playgrounds like any English public school. The number of pupils was enormous; one of my classes comprised two hundred boys. Most of them were the children of better-class parents, merchants and desert chiefs. When the stern Egyptian headmaster brought me to my first scholars I found that the town-born youths wore knickerbockers and the Bedouins their ancestral robes. Outside every classroom door stood the inevitable mounds of shoes.

Although the most important subject taught was our religion, the School of Cadis had been somewhat Westernised, and did not resemble Azhar. We used copy-books, desks, even chairs. I chalked my Koran texts on a black-board as an English schoolmaster writes his geographical or mathematical facts.

In most respects the boys possessed a disconcerting likeness to English urchins, save that they were sometimes better behaved. To them I must have appeared as a French master does to London youngsters, a stranger with a laughable pronunciation; yet they never made fun of me. This, however, does not mean that their conduct was perfect. Sometimes the small fellows—from six to eleven years old—annoyed me terribly with

fidgeting, squabbling, fighting and general hooliganism. Senior pupils, lads from twelve to eighteen years, proved much more gentlemanly, and I enjoyed teaching them the religion. Although the school did not know it, I obtained a large number of my facts from Washington Irving's *Life of the Prophet*, which I often used, together with works by other eminent European authorities, while lecturing to Orientals on Islam.

My pupils were just as fond of asking questions as any British children. The Principal, a strong Nationalist, forbade them to speak English, but of course this only made them most anxious to use my language, and some scamps took special pains to learn it in order to break the rules.

During my spare time I was interrogated about all my manners and customs. Where did I learn to pray? Where did I learn about the Prophet? Was there a train from England to Egypt? And so on. Older youths were not quite as inquisitive. Whenever I met my pupils the tiny ones would run up and kiss my hand, while the seniors touched their forehead, heart, and put their lips to my fingers. This meant: "My regard for you comes from my head, my heart, and my mouth." Bowing and handshaking are unknown among the natives. On the stage an enormous amount of non-sensical, supposedly Eastern kow-towing is shown, but this is never done in Oriental lands. Turks possess a special salute of their own. They point at their head and their feet, a symbol for the words: "I am at your disposal from my head to my heels."

I hated caning although the instrument was not unknown at the School of Cadis. If the boys misbehaved too much, I usually threatened to report them to the head-master, whereat a whole mob would dart towards my teacher's chair and kiss my hand, asking for mercy in a quaint way.

With my colleagues I got on well. They proved a good class of young Egyptians, and Labib who, by the way, was an Oxford B.A., introduced me to all of them. Hussein Effendi, another master, likewise possessed an English degree. He told me that while in Oxford a Professor introduced him at a lecture as "a gentleman from our Colony, Egypt." Furiously Hussein flared up and corrected his chairman: "I beg your pardon, sir, not a Colony," whereupon the Professor had to apologize before the students.

Every afternoon our schoolboys played football. They did this with stupendous verve, and it was highly amusing to see the wonderful drop-kicks which fellows in the trailing Bedouin costume could send while charging across the stony, sunny, Egyptian fields. The other popular amusement was swimming in the Nile, into whose muddy floods the youngsters dived with the very minimum of raiment.

I can pay the School of Cadis the compliment of saying that I felt contented there. My work unfortunately remained badly paid, but the six months I passed as a Moslem teacher constituted a unique scholastic experience.

Sometimes I saw Sheikh Ali Jussuf, who always kept up his friendly questions, and other influential Egyptians

frequently bade me to their homes. Many of them lived on a scale of surprising magnificence, their houses being resplendent with marble fountains and fittings of precious wood. Some lived on eccentric dishes whose only merit seemed to be their rarity—candied flowers and similar oddities, while one capitalist offered me cigarettes “doped” with ambergris.

Mecca looked far distant, yet I felt I could at least utilise my permit to visit places close at hand. Because of this I became interested in the Zaida Zaina Mosque, whose venerable original building (over 1,000 years old) sheltered the body of a female saint or Zaida, a granddaughter of the Prophet himself. I saw the big walls and tall tower down a street quite near the School of Cadis and happened to hear several folk say that on Molid, i.e. the birthday of its founder, the place provided a very curious sight. Beyond that and the date of the occurrence I knew nothing. Quite innocently I set out to worship yonder on the anniversary. I reached the high reconstructed doorway and gave my boots to an attendant in European clothes and a tarbush.

He was a talkative fellow, and perhaps because of that I took little account of what he said. Walking past the vaulted entrance hall I noticed women in black veils standing across the passage holding hands. This looked a most peculiar attitude and I wanted to inquire what it meant when the attendant once more came along and cried to the trousered females: “Woa handou taskar minel Sheikh-ul-Islam wa mine Kadi,” (He has a pass from the Sheikh of Islam and the Cadi). Hereat

the women chattered a great deal in shrill voices. They looked me over excitedly, but released each other's hands and let me pass.

My stockinged feet walked on a floor of tessellated marble. Suddenly a sweet and astonishingly strong odour surged through the open hall, and I found myself striding over layers of tuberose several inches deep.

On every side I saw women, hundreds, perhaps thousands of them. Not a man seemed in sight, and everybody stared most disconcertingly. By this time I was uncomfortable, but my own dignity demanded that, like all other strangers, I should go on and kiss the grave of the Saint. While innumerable eyes rested on me I walked near the tomb, a slab of stone surrounded by gilt iron work. The silk cover of the relic lay almost drowned in petals. I remembered that the Prophet was passionately fond of scented flowers, particularly of roses. His affection for them only equalled the love he felt for women, a fact which explained the presence of both in his grand-daughter's mosque. I covered the last few yards and kissed the grave.

To get out took a long time. Custom demanded that I must not, in the slightest way, touch any female and as there were enormous numbers of them all around I had to navigate most carefully through the crowd. When I reached the main portal again the door-keeper stood there gaping.

"You are the luckiest man in Cairo to get in, and probably the only one who has done this," he called. Later I learnt that on the Saint's birthday the place

was traditionally reserved for women, and that they could have killed me if they had chosen. Years after Moslems in Cairo still talked about my adventure.

Notwithstanding the exotic Oriental society of which I was a recognised member I knew my Art would eventually call me away. Sure enough, one day a cable arrived from my old employer, Leonard Rayne, the South African impresario, for whom I had worked long before. He offered me a well-paid situation as his scene-designer, and the old magnetism of the stage drew me back towards the other end of the Continent. It looked a better post than any Sheikh Ali Jussuf could offer, and so I accepted it.

Mecca, however, had not been forgotten. On my mental horizon it kept beckoning, and from its phantom minarets I heard the call: "Come as soon as you can."

My friends on the staff of the School of Cadis were, I think, a little sorry to part from their unusual colleague, but I explained that I hoped to see them sometime later—perchance after my return from the Pilgrimage. Going to the tall, seven-storeyed tenement house in which I had taken my quarters (since Koomer Slatar lay too far from the city) I packed my trunks on the flat roof used for sleeping.

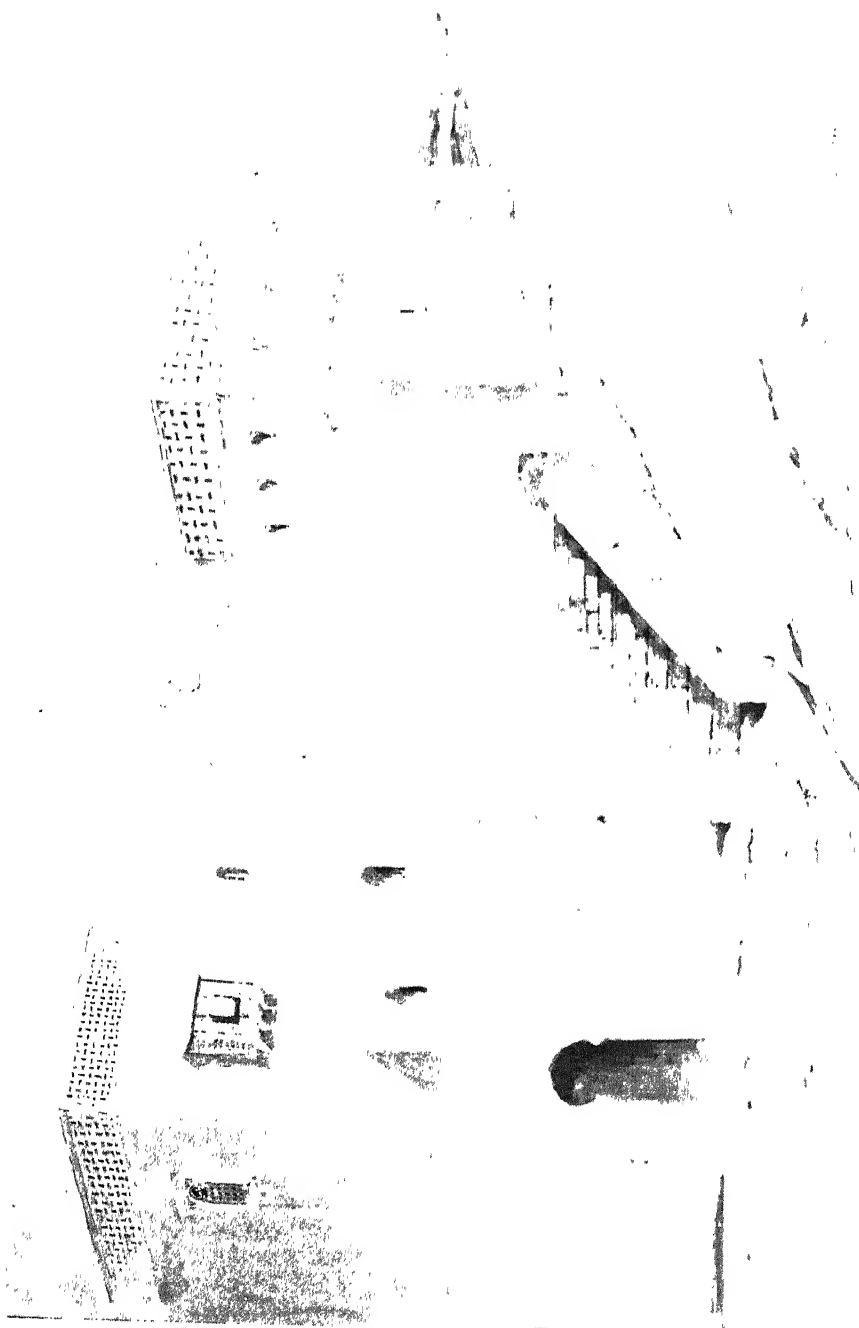
To leave Wonderful Cairo made me sad. Below moved trams and even motor cars, but they passed against a background of fretted doorways and barred casements, the East, that Mahomet, Christ and Moses knew. Now I would trek again to a young English

Dominion, where the ages of towns could be measured in decades and not in milleniums.

Round the blazingly-warm, palm-shaded eastern coast of Africa, past the gleaming deserts of the southern Sudan, the cliff-harbours of Somaliland, Sokotra and the steamy lagoons at Dar-es-Salaam, "the Door of Peace," finally along the lonely little ports on the beaches of Mozambique, a liner carried me. After a few weeks I strode over the gang-planks at Lourenço Marques, the Portuguese seaport, which gets rich on the import traffic of the Witwatersrand Goldfields. This continental-looking town kept me within its broad flagged boulevards only a few hours. Then the mail train came and took Hedley Churchward up fertile green hills towards the highlands of the Transvaal. At Ressano Garcia our carriages clanked over the Komati River and having been visited by the British Customs officers on their side of the border, they hurried across the prosperous, level veldt, towards Johannesburg.

Jungle country holding occasional game herds, native kraals whence unclothed black piccanins ran out to cheer the train, the cattle and maize country, the small but thriving colonial villages fledted beside the track. About a day later, I saw, after many years, the looming white tailings heaps and stark pithead gears that are so prominent on the Goldfields.

Johannesburg I found twice as rich, well-built and pleasure-loving as before. Leonard Raynes' manager (the producer himself was away) came to greet me, and within a day I stood among my pots and brushes



inside the good old paint-room of the Standard Theatre.

When I went to Mosque again many acquaintances remembered "Mr. Mahmoud," and during the eight months through which I worked in Johannesburg, I remained a regular attendant at the various Moslem places of worship of this city. My co-religionists on the Rand were principally Indians, but in those days when the Chinamen still worked on the Mines, quite a number of their slant-eyed faces could also be seen bending over the prayer mats.

I mentioned my intention to go to Mecca, and great was everybody's interest. "You are doing something very dangerous," spoke Moosa and Essop and Ismail and Ibrahim. Repeatedly I overheard men in turbans and fezzes talking about the school, and when the course of theatrical business ultimately took me down-country, beyond the Karroo into Cape Town, I discovered a whole number of prominent Mahomedan people had decided to do me a good turn.

While idly sitting in a Mosque there one day a grizzled Cape Malay, whom I knew as a respected Imam, addressed me.

"Mr. Mahmoud," he said, "the Cape Town Koran scholars have been speaking of your Pilgrimage, and they all think that it is a virtuous but dangerous act. Twenty of them have signed this paper which asks all good Moslems to help you, the bearer, who though an Englishman by birth, is without reproach and a member of the Faith." Hereat the old man showed a document

with a long row of Arabic signatures. The text, however, was not in that language but in English, a fact which later on made the paper valueless for practical purposes. I have never been able to understand why the scribe failed to use the tongue which every educated person in the Mahomedan world understands.

However, I did not bother about such matters then. Even my passport from the Cadi seemed more of a formality, and I very nearly forgot it. Further on you will see that it was an excellent thing for me to have included the paper in my luggage.

Towards the end of the year 1909, I definitely started preparing the trip. The contract with Leonard Rayne would soon run out, and in the bank there was money for the payment of expenses.

Clothes became the subject of my first attentions. I decided to get a complete Oriental outfit, not merely made by Europeans from patterns used in Arabia, but by a genuine Moslem tailor. Out of cool white drill a Cape Town Malay craftsman sewed me the customary white drawers, made me the neatly-hemmed sash, the thin silk shirt and wide-sleeved upper robe. One silver-worked Bedouin head-dress was already in my possession and when I tried on my outfit there was nothing except my very English appearance to show that I had not been born in a tent amid the Desert of Neijid. Experience of many years taught me how to wear outlandish garments without feeling "dressed up." In Egypt I had occasionally put on the Egyptian gown with a European sports jacket. It once happened that the owner of a

dahibiyeh (sailing ship) on the Nile, said to me, "I am waiting for the Englishman. Where is Mr. Churchward?" Whenever I went to Sheikh Ali Jussuf or any other important friend I always preferred that costume.

Matheson Lang happened to be touring South Africa about this time, and he invited me to do some work for him at Durban, in Natal. My last few weeks in Africa were occupied in painting the scenes for *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

When it came to booking for Jeddah, the harbour which serves Mecca, I found steamer connections between South Africa and Arabia about as bad as they could be. Clerks in maritime offices told me that I might perhaps wait years ere a direct ship left for that seaport, and having consulted several intelligent Indians, I was advised the best, safest and quickest route passed via Bombay.

"Go there," experienced Hajis told me. "From India dozens of ships reach Jeddah."

The *Kaiser*, a German liner, was the next vessel leaving Port Natal for Hindustan and I decided to take a ticket. Entering the agent's offices I asked for a passage, and learnt from an apologetic clerk that small-pox had broken out on board. "It is because we import Indian labourers for the sugar plantations," explained my informer. "As soon as fumigation is over, the boat will be cleaner than any other in the trade."

Perhaps it showed my unsophistication, but I took this man's word for it and arranged to sail in the *Kaiser*. I gave Matheson Lang his scenery, settled certain

business matters connected with the support of my family, and let tall brawny Zulu porters carry my cases (which were of the ordinary European design) up the ladders on to the liner. I had not yet changed over to Oriental garb. My suit was of English cut, and for the time being I did not even put on a tarbush.

“We left behind the painted buoy
That tosses at the harbour mouth.”

Then the green suburbs of Durban grew small, the masts of the shipping faded into the bluff with its light-house, and we skimmed over the sunny Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER III

ROUND THE GULF OF PERSIA

THROUGH summery seas we steamed for several days until the coast came into view again—long, flat and surmounted by greenery. Two other passengers were my companions, an elderly lady and a gentleman, both going to India, where their son had died some time before. As a memorial to him they erected a Cottage Hospital in the Hill Country and this constituted the end of their pilgrimage, one very unlike my own. In conversation I told them my calling and whither I was bound, but I do not think they believed the story. Nearly every European I met on this journey sized me up as a tourist.

Seldom had a ship held a greater populace for her size than the *Kaiser*. Our steerage was crammed with coolies. Hundreds of little groups squatted on the tarpaulins, beside the hatches, in the shadow of the winches, along the railings; some cooked tea on little portable stoves.

Inhambane, the Portuguese town which arose out of the coast when we came nearer, looked a wretched little settlement of white-washed tropical houses, and is one of the hottest towns in all Africa, which is saying a great

deal. The *Kaiser* steamed into the bay and dropped anchor amid a most imposing roadstead.

For several hours I noticed a considerable "to-do" below on the Indian deck. Boats arrived from the wharves which glittered in front of palm glades and several Portuguese officials in white ducks spoke excitedly to the Captain. Then another of our officers skipped up the companion way. His mere presence showed that something serious was amiss. Within a few minutes the words "Small-pox" reached my ears, and I realised the fumigation about which the steamship agent spoke so airily was not quite as successful as claimed. The Captain went ashore, and meanwhile I learnt how the disease had broken out among the emigrants. To know oneself cooped on to a ship where this complaint prevailed was hardly pleasant nor was the certainty that one might not leave under any circumstances.

All day we European passengers awaited news. I heard the Captain had cabled to the owners at Hamburg asking instructions. In the evening he showed us the answer:

"Vaccinate everybody or let ship be quarantined at Zanzibar."

Our surgeon now entered the steamy-hot saloon and said that he should be glad to have access to our arms. Since Islam does not forbid inoculation and I believe in it on medical grounds, I willingly went through his treatment. Every European submitted without question, but we could not refrain from asking each other (the

surgeon being suspiciously taciturn) why nobody was vaccinated before we left Durban.

I sat on the first-class deck, with my new-made friends, when I heard a raucous commotion on the foredeck which, as usual in Oriental emigrant steamers had nearly every inch crowded with returning Hindus.

Beneath us I saw the surgeon and several officers expostulating with some men who had half emerged out of a dirty staircase leading into the engine-room. They were lascars, slight-built but unbelievably tough black labourers, who worked in stokeholds where white men would have dropped from heat-stroke.

"They won't be vaccinated," called the doctor when he saw us upstairs.

Again and again the men shook their tousled, greasy heads of hair, and although their behaviour amounted to a mild kind of mutiny the Captain determined not to take risks. The inoculation never took place. Shortly after the ship signalled the port officer that a pilot was needed to take her out to sea.

Inhambane Bay looked almost glassy, but the Portuguese navigator who came alongside in a boat yelled that a hurricane was blowing down the Mozambique Channel from Madagascar and not for all the Saints would he or anybody else in the town bring us over the bar.

A good deal of telescope gazing from the crow's nest showed very rough water beyond the harbour heads. Nevertheless the German captain bellowed rudely at

the pilot and said he intended to take the *Kaiser* out himself.

Our engines had been started up and presently the propeller pushed the liner towards the mouth of the bay. Every moment the breeze grew colder and stronger. Abstractly the idea of risking a storm appeared very noble but in actual fact it made people on board pretty nervous. The sand bar which closed the entrance to the bay could be noticed even by landlubbers, a wide, streaky, churned-up tract of water where wrecks and submerged stones lay a few feet from our keel.

Like Antonio I was only able to

“Bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which touching but my gentle vessel's side
Would robe the roaring waters in my silks.”

The gale blew till one could hardly stand on deck. Yet the idea that the *Kaiser* might be sinking within the next few minutes kept us white passengers near a lifeboat.

Wide and green the Indian Ocean lay in front of the prow. “Are we safe?” everybody wondered.

A jerky shaking ran through the hull for several seconds. We had grazed the sandy floor of the bar. The propeller still turned: steerage Indians came into the spray-laden open air carrying tin trunks, babies and other possessions.

I watched the rollers and the charthouse on the bridge. Presently the skipper pushed his head out and

waved his peaked cap. Not a word could be heard, but we knew the ship had won her gamble.

Throughout the next two days we steamed ahead of a hurricane and longed for Zanzibar. Seldom did the sight of a port seem more welcome to ordinary travellers than those two big islands which at last showed their clove groves above the sea. We almost cheered when the port officials were rowed out by nude oarsmen wearing the badge of the Sultan who ruled the territory. Until the Indians had all undergone medical inspection there was no question of going ashore. The Yellow Jack flapped from our mast with depressing aggressiveness while, through a spy glass, I studied the white town which I had on previous voyages seen at close quarters. Quarantine officials declared the *Kaiser*, for the time being, irrevocably plague-stricken and another very small steamer called the *Somali* was engaged to carry us to India.

Gangs of equatorial blacks shipped my luggage into the launch of the other boat which lay across the roadstead.

If the German vessel had been crowded, the emergency craft was swamped with passengers. One could not move along the deck without treading either on an Indian coolie or his belongings. Ordinary European travellers never used the *Somali* because of her age, so I felt quite happy to find the first officer's cabin available for me. Moreover, there was no small-pox aboard, a circumstance worth a good deal after the excitements of the last few days. Though the ship had not become

infected, quarantine regulations required her to stay on the high seas at least three weeks in order to get a clean bill of health for her "suspect" cargo.

This dreary time the Captain took to idle across towards Bombay. Without any obstructions the decks would have been ludicrously small, but now that they were overloaded and used as living quarters there was not even any chance to walk along what restricted space they possessed. Consequently everybody remained in a bad humour, and we approached the final stage of irritation when our commander announced the whole steamer had to be fumigated and completely repainted before it came to port.

Over the pitching waves lascar and European sailors hoisted out platforms on which they sat brushing the craft's iron plates. The job looked most dangerous, but mariners consider these things coolly. Our subsequent fumigation, when the various bulkheads and cabins were sealed up with paper, and many doors might only be opened at the risk of suffocation, was a nightmarish little adventure amid the heat of the equator. That we should ever reach Bombay seemed unlikely, but eventually the *Somali* did steer along the Apollo Bunder into the docks of the huge Asiatic town.

Despite the steamer's smallness, several Indian hotel porters found it before long and swooped up the quay-side asking for custom. There were only three "Europe" passengers to fight over and I got plenty of attention. One fellow wanted to take me to some places about which I knew nothing, so I said: "I must stay at a

Mahomedan and not a Hindu hotel." The turbaned official looked surprised, and exclaimed in good English: "But why, Sheikh?" "I am a Moslem," was the reply. Seldom have I seen such perplexity as spread over this fellow's face. It was obvious, nevertheless, that the words gave him pleasure. Very respectfully he saluted and said, "Sahib, go to the Shah Jehan Palace."

In a gharry or native cab, I went past the domed palaces that house Bombay's business firms, through crooked bazaar streets and great factory districts, till I came among the villas of wealthy Europeans. Here stood a small hostelry with something like forty or fifty rooms, almost solely patronised by Indians. A very courteous, brown-skinned man, richly dressed, appeared at the entrance porch before I left the vehicle. He gave the customary Mahomedan greeting and, seemed to know who I was. Evidently the hotel porter had given him a gratifying description of me, for a Rajah could not have received more cordial hospitality. We soon became friends.

My room possessed modern furnishings, and in its organization, waiters, dining-rooms, luggage storage, the hotel resembled a fashionable European establishment. Only two things remained distinctive. No liquor could be brought there since the Prophet forbids its consumption and every morsel of food served had been proved "Kosher" by Moslem standards.

My host was extremely religious, in fact a Syed or descendant of Mahomet. He carried the title of

Shereef which in the East is often used by prominent Hajis, but I am sorry to say, notwithstanding his illustrious relationship, he was not well versed in Islam. To me, however, Jusuf Shah proved one of the best friends I made during my pilgrimage.

Seeing that the Shah Jehan Palace proprietor appeared a man of influence, I thought he might be able to give counsel.

"Shereef," I said while we squatted in my room, which overlooked the crowded bay, "perhaps you can advise a pilgrim who has never yet visited Mecca."

"What!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Mahmood, you are going to try a very risky thing. However, it is to the glory of Allah and I consider it an act of virtue to assist. You must first get a passport."

"I have a passport," I explained, and mentioned what the Cadi of Egypt had given me.

"That," he said, "would not be sufficient. You must go to the Secretariat and obtain an Indian one."

On the following day I visited the aforesaid stately Government building and found an office where many native clerks devoted their time to the issuing of safe-conducts for pilgrims. It took a long while before they would believe I was no mere joker, but an earnest man who wanted a passport on religious grounds: I saw the First, Second, Third and Fourth Superintendents, and finally heard that I could not be served at the Secretariat, which only concerned itself with folk actually born in India.

"What on earth should I do?" I demanded.

"Try the Turkish Consul," ran the departmental suggestion.

My hotel-keeper personally took me to the latter dignitary in a noisy local turnout. Oddly enough the Sultan's representative proved a Christian—a whiskered Armenian, Syrian, or similar national. English was one of the languages he spoke, and I soon got to work inside the cool arched office, explaining what I wanted.

"My dear sir," protested the Osmanli diplomat, "what jurisdiction have I got? My country exercises no power over people from the Cape. All you can do is to try the Cadi of Bombay."

I reached a white-washed, barred house in the smelly streets of the native quarter, where the town's chief ecclesiastical dignitary lived. Owing to the sun, His Reverence was taking things easy in the courtyard when the Syed and I came in. He only wore a loin cloth, and kept lazily chanting from the Koran. After a statement of my business had been put into Gujarati, which was the only tongue he understood, the Cadi referred me to the Chief Imam of Bombay.

Up to then I used to make my prayers in a curious, half-ruined old Mosque opposite the hotel. It lacked a roof and could not really be called a building at all, but a walled piece of ground, on one edge of which stood indicated the Meerab or symbolic niche showing the direction of Mecca. Thinking that I might find the Chief Imam at the Jama Masjid (Great Mosque), a place I had not yet seen, Jusuf Shah suggested a visit there. With a servant I reached the huge Moorish structure

in time for Mograb (evening prayers), because the heat of Bombay makes it nearly impossible for any European to go out before sunset. I wore a tarbush, that my forehead might touch the ground while praying. Beyond a high doorway many men were busy in the twilight unrolling the mats on which one executes the prescribed rakahts or obeisances to Allah.

The Chief Imam was not there, but after my devotions, I sat for a while in the shadow of a great column near a staircase in order to study the amazingly picturesque worshippers, who seemed representative of all the Islamic races between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin. Hill Tribesmen carrying crooked swords walked beside placid peasants from the plains of native states. In addition to labourers of a type that also swarmed throughout Natal I found elegantly dressed professional men, in cut-aways and Bond Street frock-coats, but turbaned.

Lost in the examination of this Eastern pageant, I did not notice an old man, evidently from some coastal region, who had walked up to me. As I looked round and saw his grey beard and shabby gown, he placed three copper coins at my side. They were annas, worth about a hundredth of a rupee. Ere I could stop him the Syed's servant, who lounged nearby, sprang forward and raced after the retreating giver, calling out very unsavoury words. Coming back without the money, the hotel employee explained that this present was not made solely out of charity. "He evidently knew you were on the Haj, Sahib," spoke the attendant, "and so

wanted to get your blessing." My companion thought it wrong that anybody should acquire merit by stealth, yet for myself, I confess I would have liked to keep those pilgrim alms as a souvenir.

Bombay, however, is not by any means a place where the citizens show rural simplicity.

The Syed flatly forbade me to go shopping alone. "Since," he declared, "my countrymen will defraud you." As I was a man of mature years, this taboo seemed excessively strict, so rather nettled, I decided, as an experiment, to purchase an umbrella—one of the green-lined sunshades essential in tropic climates. Going down town I found a shop which displayed a large array of these articles. Picking out a strongly made specimen, I let the salesman take it down and paid for it. When I was at the "Shah Jehan Palace" again, the Syed saw me and rather severely he asked where I had been. This school-boyish mode of address annoyed me, but I explained, "I bought myself an umbrella."

"Let me see it," ordered the hotel keeper. Proudly I unfurled the gamp, until suddenly the opening mechanism stuck. "Look," observed the host, "two ribs broken." Now I am quite certain that the specimen I picked out was perfect, so the only explanation is that the shopman had, by some sleight-of-hand, substituted the broken sunshade.

For several days I felt timid about further purchases. Needing some stamps for letters, I thought, however, "Here at least you are safe," and went to a nearby Post Office. The Hindu behind the counter gave me the

correct quantity, and delightedly tinkling the change in my purse, I returned home. Once again the Syed appeared in the office.

"Well," he inquired, "have you done some more shopping?"

"Only stamps," I said apologetically.

My friend frowned and wanted to look at the change. I pulled it out and sure enough, three of the coins were bad money. A gharry was ambling past the hotel and the host insisted on calling it. Swiftly we rode down to the Government office and I soon pointed out the clerk who had served me. On the man's shiny face there remained the blankness of illimitable ignorance.

"You gave me three bad coins," I said while the Syed looked over my shoulder.

"Excuse me," answered the Civil servant, "I have only just come on duty."

Without ado, the proprietor of the Shah Jehan Palace went and called in a turbaned Sikh policeman who fetched the postmaster. A single peep at the clerk's time-sheet proved he had been in the office for many hours, and the drama finished up with the arrest of the stamp salesman.

Hereafter I left myself, in matters of shopping, under the Syed's capable guardianship.

Meanwhile, my hunt for a Mecca passport was not neglected. I visited a very influential Moslem doctor, who behaved as politely as everybody else, but who also regretted he could do nothing. "My people

are like that," exclaimed Jusuf Shah when I told him. "Sign a paper they won't; give you money, they will."

We often went to the Mosque in company, and on one occasion, at Mograb, strolled into a section of the building where sounded a continuous twittering. "Surely," I said, "they do not keep caged birds here?"

"Certainly," answered my companion.

"It is against the teachings of Islam to let them live in captivity," I told him. A remark which astonished my friend, though he was a Syed. He cried: "If you know such things, why don't you lecture on them? You would make all the expenses you have had in going to Mecca." I answered that I could not do this since my learning was not great enough. "I wish," said Jusuf, "that I knew as much."

For me it was pleasant to meet a young Egyptian. He lived at the hotel and knew little about India. Together we once went purchasing fruit, and during the course of our talk, he asked me, "What is the food that tastes like Hell, and burns like Hell?" (Curry is unknown in the Nile country.)

Our path took us through the evil-smelling streets of the native quarter. A Turk who arrived at the Shah Jehan from Constantinople and who sold Moslem books, had just before complained to me about the dirt of India, in particular about the noisome cult of betel-chewing practised by its people. Walking through the unsavoury alleys, I remember his frightened face when

I had told him, "This is one of the cleanest towns in the country."

My Egyptian and I presently saw a large Mosque, with the broad front verandah usual in India. Long-drawn chantings and calls of applause echoed out of its windows, and it seemed that a festival was in progress.

Going inside for a moment, I discovered the worshippers knew about me. I received an excellent seat, and between the prayers one Imam proffered indigestible sweetmeats mixed with crystallized fruits. Loud screechings and the thumps of falling stones interrupted us during a sermon. We ran into the street, and saw between the bazaar booths a number of men beating each other with planks. For some minutes I did not know what created the trouble, but soon the young Egyptian, snirking delightedly, hurried up and yelled, "Effendi, those are Hindu dogs, and we will not let them pass the Mosque." This small incident drew my attention to the distressing bitterness which exists between folk of different faiths in most Indian cities.

Several weeks after I left the *Somali* at the docks I met the Chief Imam of Bombay. He was a very religious but very unenterprising man. "Go without a passport, in the name of Allah," he airily advised, and after I told the Syed the latter said: "Mr. Mahmoud, I think he is right. You can rely on the Blessing of Heaven."

Irritation overcame me. I decided to take my chance and entered the great offices of the Bombay-Persian Line, a company controlled by Moslems, which ran a

service not only to the Shah's domains, but also round the coast of Arabia. In the big city building they told me it was the off-season for pilgrim traffic, but if I did not mind first voyaging up the Persian Gulf the *Islamic* would within a few days be leaving for Jeddah.

"Will the food on board be prepared according to Mahomedan law or must I make my own arrangements?"

"You need not worry," replied the surprised clerk, "there is a Moslem cook on each of our ships."

This information proved that the culinary supremacy my co-religionists possess throughout Hindustan persists even in its surrounding waters. Though few people know it, almost all the meat eaten in India, by Europeans as well as by Asiatics, is prepared in Moslem slaughter-houses.

An opportunity to see many rarely-accessible ports along the Persian Gulf seemed an attraction, so, having taken a look at the ship and found her an old but fairly large and quite well-fitted iron cargo steamer, I booked. Plates of extraordinary thickness covered the hull as a kind of armour, a precaution whose meaning I only discovered later.

Leave-taking from the Shah Jehan Palace was in my case more than the mere departure of a hotel guest. Jusuf Shah had been a real friend, and when I finally followed my luggage into a cab, the Syed handed me a parcel.

"This is a prayer-mat," he said; "use it at Mecca, and when you do so, remember me."

Dressed in a kind of semi-military duck suit of European cut, I came on board, and in due course the boat slowly steamed past the Island of Elephanta while the towers of Bombay vanished.

The *Islamic* carried genuine old-fashioned cannon as a protection against pirates. They were installed during her distant youth when she was the *Gulf of Mexico*, a crack liner of mid-Victorian times.

My deck cabin proved so hot that I never used it, but during the several weeks' voyage I slumbered on the open planking beneath the rainless sky. On the lower deck we had some twenty Indian pilgrims, including two whole families with small children. They camped under a canvas awning on the fore-deck, and seemed to do nothing else all day but cook food.

A small, friendly band of white men became my companions. The ship belonged to Indians, yet its officers were Scotch and English. Captain T. L. Green was a shrewd-eyed fellow who, I am certain, took me for an adventurer, not a pilgrim. With his thin figure and little beard, he resembled Captain Kettle in Cutcliffe Hyne's yarns. On the first day the skipper invited me to dinner, which a brown steward served beneath canvas upon the upper deck. At table I received an introduction to a very gentlemanly young English Lieutenant in the Indian Army. He told us he was stationed at Aden, which ranks as a portion of the Bombay Presidency, and is consequently also garrisoned from that part of Asia.

During our talk, the Captain described how the ship had just been fitted with new machinery.

"I hope it will work well," cried the Lieutenant, "because my furlough runs out in nine days." Anxiously he eyed the seaman. The latter took a glance over the glary water and said with caution: "Under normal circumstances she could easily reach Aden by then, but I don't quite know how the new boilers will work. Still—she may do it." I could see my military friend was decidedly uncomfortable, and he eagerly listened when, towards the end of the meal, the First Officer came out of the chart-house and asked, "Do you know what we are doing?" "Oh," the Captain peered at the foam round the propeller, "Eight or nine knots?"

"Like Hell," put in the officer. "We are making six."

"In that case," spoke the skipper turning towards the Lieutenant, "we can't reach Aden in time."

The army man muttered grimly: "I shall be court-martialled," and henceforth tried to make the best of the days still at his disposal before the military trial started.

Conversation passed to a discussion of my Pilgrimage. The Lieutenant declared he often heard about these attempts to reach Mecca, but he did not believe anybody ever got beyond Jeddah. Having given me several gruesome stories of Englishmen who had been cut up by Bedouins, he said: "I bet you, Mr. Churchward, that you will never send me a post-card from Mecca."

"Done!" I answered. In due course, I may add, he received it, with the Turkish post-mark to show its authenticity.

Two or three days on the high seas brought us to Muscat, the first Arabian town I ever saw. The shabby, straggling settlement fringes a coast of coral and is famous for its nutmeg. Around the outskirts stand many groves of trees which carry the pleasant-smelling nuts. In Germany people actually call the spice "Muskat."

This seaport has a typically Indian look, and among the inhabitants who visited the ship in boats one noted great numbers of Hindus. The *Islamic* lay amid the roadstead, and we were told that access to the shore was forbidden. No grounds were mentioned, but I fancy that as usual, plague had broken out. Nothing, however, prevented me buying local scents and silks. Though not quite such characteristic commodities as nutmeg, they actually provide a greater volume of trade for the town. Beside our iron flanks lighters bobbed on the wavelets while a certain amount of cargo was hoisted out from our hold.

During the morning some sailors set a fishing line and presently dragged a dolphin on deck. It was a most beautiful fish, with its classically curved tail and thick, symmetrical lips—just as shown on old Greek friezes. Captain Green had the creature boiled for supper. The clean, fine white flesh possessed a rich, pleasant taste.

That evening I noticed several local Arabs leaning upon the bulwarks excitedly pointing at the sky.

Naturally I turned in the same direction, but never expected the marvel which I then saw overhead.

Across the Milky Way gleamed a vast, whitish band of light merging into a fuzzy spot of brightness—Halley's Comet. Nobody aboard the *Islamic* had hitherto observed anything, and our Captain reprimanded the seamen for not reporting this phenomenon earlier. Learned Mahomedans told me it was a very fortunate omen seeing that it occurred during my Pilgrimage. Every Arab I found studying the spectacle showed impressive reverence for the work of the Almighty. Throughout the journey, I beheld that wonderful belt of flame over the Northern sky and I think Halley's Comet added a good deal to my prestige.

With the new day we left Muscat, and sailing close to an often rocky coast, over which I saw distant jagged mountains, made a course towards Bundar Abbas. Before we came to this port which, I understand, has lately become important through its convenient situation on the Anglo-Indian Air Route, the look-out sighted a ship flying its Union Jack half-mast. I watched some lascars go aloft carrying semaphore flags. The white and blue cloth waved crisply in the wind and presently a signal on the other steamer spelt out: "His Majesty the King Died Yesterday." This happened on the 7th or 8th of May, 1910, just after King Edward breathed his last. Immediately our own colours were hauled down.

Our gesture of mourning led to curious results. Several fisher villages could at times be noticed along the fore-

shore, settlements so abysmally dirty that travellers discovered the fact even when at sea. From one of these a rowing boat arrived, as the *Islamic* slowly went past. The leader of the naked Persians started talking to some of our officers, and then I learnt they had come to inquire whether the half-mast flag meant we had plague.

On our trip to Bundar Abbas it was evident that the Persian Gulf carried many ships though few of them were steamers. Nearly all the craft which skimmed the sky-line proved to be dhows, clumsy, yet astonishingly seaworthy Arab boats with a single triangular sail in the centre of their hulls. None of them came very near us, and the Captain told the lieutenant and me that he was certain more than one carried slaves.

"Trade still goes on to a small extent. The British Admiralty keeps cruisers and patrol gunboats up here but the sea's pretty big."

Bundar Abbas is not a large town. Mighty amphitheatres of mountains surround the flat-roofed settlement, of which we could hardly see anything except white houses and minarets. Once again we were forbidden to land. Turkish officials in fezzes and tropical uniforms rowed out in a boat.

"What on earth is that instrument?" I inquired when they came alongside.

Across the rowlocks of the craft lay a bewildering-looking iron appliance. What was my perplexity when two men solemnly unfolded it and showed the contraption as a gigantic pair of tongs, four or five feet long.

In a most nonchalant and casual way, some sailors came on deck carrying bags marked "His Majesty's Mails." These they handed over the bulwarks and the ends of the tongs skilfully seized the canvas.

"Plague," curtly explained the Captain.

Only a few hours did we stay in this unattractive harbour ere we went on our way to Abudjer. It was scattered and white-washed and rock-bound, and above all immensely hot. Persian ports seemed very much alike on the whole. Dielem, however, lay completely out of sight behind a flat muddy beach. Lighters arrived from nowhere in particular and allowed the *Islamic's* derricks to place cargo bales in their holds; then we moved on again. The next harbour, Jesiret, was no longer in Persia but in Arabia. Had our ship not been a tramp, and had she not been specially bidden to stop there for news, the Captain would never have halted at this forsaken town. All the sparse mails for its marooned European residents must be carried by occasional callers.

As far as I could make out we anchored opposite an island fringed with the most depressing tidal flats, and despite all the waste of time we did not even have the satisfaction of getting in any letters. Orders were bawled down into the engine room and whistling steam told that we were steering as fast as possible away from the wretched spot. Unfortunately the ship could only move with such painful slowness that she had to enter the dry dock immediately after her return to Bombay.

One afternoon I was shown some spots near the horizon—the Pearl Islands of Bahrein where, for thousands of years, divers have plunged in search of the most beautiful gems men know. Nearby began a region which owns the spicy name of the Pirate Coast. It is by no means a fanciful one, and sailormen declared that not every ship going among the dhows possesses unimpeachable maritime credentials.

Another array of mud flats told us we had reached Ashara. Notwithstanding this, we came very close inshore and could distinguish the people moving about the streets. On a rise above the beach I saw the most horrible sight that ever came before me, an advanced case of elephantiasis about which I shall, however, say nothing further.

Ashara is a cable station, and the Captain made use of its facilities in order to find out whether any cargo would be available at Mokallah, a semi-independent state in the South of Arabia.

I was very delighted to hear the Sultan had cabled back that he particularly wanted the *Islamic* to call in order to bring him petrol for his motor yacht. While rounding this part of the coast, the recent history of the curious, unknown commonwealth was explained to me.

An Indian Rajah, tired of the incomplete sovereignty which the British allowed him in Hindustan, had done what probably never before occurred in the world's history—bought himself a kingdom, lock, stock and barrel. I do not know what the purchase price amounted to, but in due course the Prince arrived at the capital

city and established a Court thousands of miles away from any civilised country. He was, I heard, an interesting man, who knew a certain amount about the Western world.

On board the *Islamic* travelled a native merchant of Bombay, fat, placid and very prosperous. Our voyage constituted his first ocean trip, and while we were rounding Arabia in the direction of Mokallah, this worthy asked the Captain whether we would be passing the equator.

"Why?" demanded the officer, rather surprised.

"Because," explained the capitalist, "I was hoping to see the baptism ceremony which the Christians perform when they cross the line."

Our skipper chuckled, and told us about the Hindu's question.

"Why not give him the pleasure," exclaimed the Lieutenant; "I wouldn't mind joining in the fun." So the passenger learnt that, despite the absence of an equator, we would have a little impromptu display for his especial good. The sailors soon entered into the spirit of the joke, and duly the excited merchant eyed His Majesty King Neptune, rising, full of seaweed and tangled coral, out of the shark-swarming Indian Ocean. Certain men specially volunteered to be soaped and lathered in the old maritime way.

Shortly after this curious celebration, which brought the blandest smiles of joy on to the fat face of our wealthy companion, the Sultanate of Mokallah came in view.

Below a very hot-looking, reddish mountain range down whose slopes no plants could grow, spread yet another white-washed town surrounding a small bay. Anchoring near enough to see that crowds of Arabs clustered on the foreshore and pointed at the ship, we made ready for the first shore visit of the journey. Captain Green's gig was hoisted from the davits, and when my friend and I had donned some more elaborate clothing than the collarless flannels we favoured during the heat of recent days, lascars rowed us towards a little pier among the coral rocks.

CHAPTER IV

I VISIT A SULTAN

MOKALLAH appeared an old, ramshackle Eastern city after we got into its shady streets. The Captain wanted to visit the Bombay-Persian Line office and a tattered young rascal showed us a track alongside quaint, half-ruined mosques and various stairs crossing crooked shop-lanes.

Not a single Englishman lived in the town. Its steamship office, a white-washed shanty, very crudely furnished with battered desks and benches, held a staff of Indians, while the cable-station on the beach was similarly manned. They felt glad to see us, those poor devils from Hindustan, and offered us what inferior coffee their store-room contained. But in the midst of our somewhat mild-mannered party, a whiskered, turbaned, sashed, booted and gaudily jacketed man strode through the door. "His Highness," he said in fairly bad English, "want you at Palace."

An invitation to see a Sultan! Green and I looked at each other and nodded.

"Car is in street," bellowed the court official, and we were led out to the thoroughfare where an old-fashioned open landau, drawn by a team of mules,

stood parked. Very original the turnout looked, especially as the draught animals carried bells, embossed backcloths, and plumes akin to those on an European hearse. A corpulent, white-clad coachman squatted on the driver's seat. When the door had been banged, a horde of citizens watched the carriage disappear up a very hilly and narrow street where the lofty house-fronts once or twice closed together in such a way that the axles of the wheels chipped plaster from the walls on either side. At these spots the guests were invited to get down and walk until the runway grew a little safer.

The Sultan's palace was by far the biggest building in Mokallah. High, dazzlingly glary walls, fringed the royal dwelling; thus we failed to notice its extent until we rolled through a gate. Here an Indian soldier who stood inside an European sentry-box saluted us with an old-fashioned Arab matchlock gun.

It must have been between two or three in the afternoon and the wide courtyard in which the driver pulled up was quite empty. Round about the quadrangle rose shaded colonnades and arches closed with carved wooden shutters of Moorish shape. I felt so warm that breathing became an effort since the blazing gas which men call air in Mokallah does not seem to keep the lungs going. From the front seat the messenger who had invited us dismounted, and, beckoning the Europeans to go under the cloisters, ran into the unknown dusk of the inner building. Our coachman clatteringly drove away, and for several minutes we

heard nothing except the splash of falling water amid a fretted basin in the centre of the yard. Outside the still open gate lounged the sentry; overhead was a sky into which one could not look. Grated little windows, high up the wall, and thick doors, firmly shut, gave the undiluted Eastern Palace atmosphere.

On the flag-stones of this building one did not hear slipped footfalls. Suddenly the messenger was back and salaaming. "His Highness," he explained, "want your card." Into the vest pocket of his thin uniform went the hand of the Captain. "Confound it," were his words as an angry expression came on his youngish face, "I have left all mine on the ship."

"Never mind," I soothed, "here are two of my own in Arabic." While at Cape Town I had a number of cards printed for use when visiting Malay friends, and taking one inscribed "Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward" I wrote the Captain's name on the other. Holding them reverently by the edges, our friend vanished again and then reappeared.

"Come," he invited.

We found ourselves in another big courtyard whose sides were lined with pillared arcades. Our approach created a most disconcerting din. Trumpets blared, bells rang, various wooden mallets knocked together, tom-toms beat and through the whole noise flowed the ring of cymbals.

"Good heavens," I exclaimed, "What is this?"

Laboriously the Captain kept his face straight and pointed towards the centre of the quadrangle. Between

the ribbed stems of several majestic date-palms I saw a typical London bandstand, the kind one would notice in an East End park, and on it an entire platoon of Indian soldiers, dressed in a kind of sepoy uniform, was twanging "God Save the King" on Oriental instruments. This, of course, took place in our honour, and we briskly saluted a Union Jack hovering on a pole near the seraglio quarters. Taking a swift peep at the orchestra, I found it played with considerable skill according to the peculiar counterpoint of the land. Among the instruments figured a kind of small triangular harp, very like the type used in Ancient Egypt.

Hereafter a negro, almost naked and obviously a slave, greeted us, pointing into a wide door. This was the throne room. Persian carpets covered a fairly big floor, on which sat several elderly Arabs. Upon the far side we discovered the Sultan himself, lolling on a kind of small throne or divan stacked with silk cushions, curiously upholstered and quilted like a Bedouin saddle-bag. This ruler dressed without regard to modern conventions. His dark, rather thickly-formed features were very Indian, and over them rested a mighty turban holding a pearl aigrette. Each ear likewise glistened with these gems, of which he seemed fond. A simple but handsome light-coloured robe covered the Sultan's stocky figure. When we entered his thin, short-bearded, youngish face was leaning over two boys who sat by his side. They looked about ten or twelve years old, and behaved in a most affec-

tionate way to the potentate. Later I learnt they were his sons.

Having salaamed to him and received his polite reply, the Sultan of Mokallah asked us: "Who sent me the Arabic card?"

I said it was mine.

"Yours?" cried the ruler, "how can this be?"

When he understood that I was a true Moslem, his grave face became joyous, and from that moment the sovereign paid more honour to me than to all the other men before him, continually addressing his conversation to "Haji Mahmoud."

Talking sociably to a Sultan, especially if the latter is not very good at English, proves a cumbersome job. Our friend made some indifferent remarks about the weather (how wonderfully this topic keeps tongues moving throughout the world), but I could see he kept thinking about other matters. A description of my conversion to Islam held his attention. Then the monarch clapped hands and a slave ran forward.

"Give me the bag," he ordered in Arabic.

The servant lifted an embroidered cloth and showed a small linen sack from which we felt astonished to see His Highness pulling several mineral samples. For a South African like myself, whose countrymen are everlastingly prospecting or floating companies, this looked like a touch of the homeland, and I almost expected him to use the familiar Johannesburg talk about ore reserves, tonnages, and extraction facilities.

"I think," said the Sultan, "that this is coal."

The Captain and I took a look at the slaty, flaky, pitch-black mass. My own views counted little, but it was interesting to hear Green asserting the discovery might be genuine. Straightway the potentate became most cheerful and declared: "You must come with me to the mine. I want to drive you there."

Having a few hours available, and not wishing to miss such a peculiar ride, we agreed to join him. Several men went out to prepare the carriage and in the meantime slaves carried round little silver trays holding gracefully shaped cups of coffee and crystalized fruit on salvers, called "Zarf" throughout Arabia.

The Sultan trekked about in style. His own turnout looked much more gorgeous even than the one which had brought us. Like the latter, it was a landau, a particularly big one, pulled by two beautiful local horses in silver harness. Red tassels and other Oriental ornaments dangled from them and this, together with a crew of two coachmen in front and two behind, made the Lord Mayor's Show look quite decrepit.

Slowly the monarch left the throne, pulling his garments into place just as an English girl does her skirts. When he reached the courtyard the band, which had been playing the most wearisome, long-drawn Indian tunes, flared anew into "God Save the King."

On either side of the Sultan sat a European guest. Happening to look round I was even more overwhelmed for six resplendent cavalrymen, dressed like the sentry, lined up as a bodyguard. "In my country," explained the Sultan, "I must be careful."

A particularly raucous trumpet blast announced the moment when we left the Palace. The soldier at the gate shouldered arms, and we saw a number of folk running out of neighbouring houses. Each grimy Arab knelt down and kissed the dusty ground as we passed.

Over roads so bad that even those of South Africa would appear desirable, the landau clattered and lurched. Having skirted the boundaries of Mokallah town, we passed into a real wilderness, an uncultivated, grassless mountain country, where stones continually slid from weathered precipices and where one could not look far because twists in the trail brought brown hillsides across each line of vision.

Two or three times filthy clusters of houses fronted some anæmic fields of maize, and yonder again the residents prostrated themselves before their master. Altogether, however, I thought that unless the kingdom had been a dead bargain, the former Indian Rajah did not make a very good purchase. The Sultan told us his domains went two hundred miles inland, but beyond a certain range there existed nothing but desert, which he was happy to leave in the possession of its indigenous Bedouins. We wondered what the waste lands must be like if the part through which we now travelled constituted the settled area.

On the tops of several crags one noticed towers and straggling stone ramparts, evidently castles, all very ruined and serrated.

"Hm!" said the Captain peering round, "I hope we are not going to be attacked by Arabs."

"It will be all right," said His Highness. "Those cavalymen are still behind us and we will not go beyond the edge of the desert."

After several hours, during which we became fairly taciturn owing to the fearsome shaking, the Sultan showed us a hill on the sky-line, which marked the commencement of "No Man's Land." An extra fast bit of driving took the carriage over the crest in a short while.

For hundreds upon hundreds of miles one looked into nothingness.

"Sand and only sand and sand and sand again," as Kinglake so aptly words it in *Eöthen*. We stared upon the panorama till our eyes watered and then the Sultan smilingly pointed out his coal mine.

Along the base of a lofty cliff gaped several holes into which we were invited to look. They formed a kind of quarry, six or eight feet deep, and on a level with our feet about a dozen Arabs perspiringly shovelled black stones.

"Will not that make a coal mine?" eagerly asked the head of the Mokallah State. My Captain friend took several inky fragments off a mound where a few tons had accumulated and shrewdly studied them. "Without testing," he said, "one cannot say much about the quality but it is clear you really have coal."

Rarely did a man look as pleased as the Sultan. He fingered the edges of his pits affectionately and put one or two extra pieces from the dump in his pocket. Actually there seemed to be quite a lot of the fuel,

ON THE ROAD TO MECCA
A Turkish fort guarding the Pilgrim Trail through the desert to the sea. Note the telegraph line in the foreground.

though the skipper confided to me that its quality appeared pretty poor.

After we got to Aden, the Captain, during a dinner ashore, described the excavations. Our omniscient British Colonial Service knew all about them, but feared the occurrence would not increase the monarch's revenue much.

"I certainly hope it will, however," commented the head of one department, "because he owes this Government quite a considerable amount in respect of a doctor's bill he incurred long ago, when plague broke out at Mokallah."

Our sojourn at the coal mine lasted about half an hour, which period amply sufficed to exhaust every fascination existing in this lonely, desolate quarter of Asia. The landau friskily returned to the town and right through the trip the Sultan made evident his complete delight about our favourable, though unauthoritative opinions. From the sea a pleasing coolness mounted up, due to the approach of sunset.

"You must have tea at the Palace," begged our host, but the Captain said: "We will be late for dinner on board."

Notwithstanding this, one could not entirely abandon the fascinating "spread" which the royal cook had prepared. After our re-entry into the courtyard we sat down beside a large tray holding several dozen basins, some containing pickles, others stewed fruits, others meat pasties and equally varied delicacies, all steaming hot. For myself, I would have liked to eat

a luscious supper offered as a continuation to this palate-tickler, only Green insisted that ship duties called him back. "In that case," spoke the Sultan, "could you let me have the petrol for my launch?"

"You will get it to-morrow," was the reply. About seven o'clock in the evening, when the lamps of Mokallah were gracefully reflected in the harbour, we climbed on the *Islamic* again.

My Lieutenant friend, who began earnestly to think about his home-coming at Aden, wanted to know how long we would stick in this hole. Captain Green said that at least another day was necessary to finish the transshipping arrangements, and he suggested an outing through the bazaar might fill the time for those who had no work. Next morning, therefore, we passengers rowed ashore.

Moored against the crumbly mole rested several Arab craft, their sails furled and narrow decks oozing pitch. Between these ships I saw a low, white, awning-covered motor boat—the yacht of the Sultan. Several sailors from the *Islamic* straddled on to the unpretentious vessel in order to stow safely divers tins holding petrol, while the foreigners from Frankistan clambered behind a waiting Indian steamship agent up the pier-side. Even before we got to the top the military man exclaimed, "Churchward, I think someone is going to get a special reception."

We faced an array of long-coated worthies who salaamed in a most elaborate way, and announced that they hoped our path would be sprinkled with

flowers and the visit result in permanent prosperity for Mokallah. Guessing they might be the local Mayor and Corporation, the dutiful foreigners thanked them and continued their stroll towards the bazaar.

Never did I expect such a welcome. Evidently each citizen knew the Sultan counted us his friends.

The consequence was that wherever our idling feet passed amid the crooked causeways folk went on their knees and kissed the ground. Even the Lieutenant, a man accustomed to respectful treatment from the Hindus, whispered that he had not, in all his born days, received this kind of greeting. The Indian from the Bombay-Persian office marched with us like a particularly important peacock, and every now and then invited the public to stand back so that the illustrious Englishmen might obtain something at the booths. Merchant after merchant smirked into our faces in order to let the glamour of our custom attach to his establishment, yet we only bought a few trifles, shiny little daggers, necklaces in strange coral, and some horse trappings. We took another look at the Palace, being followed by very many Mokallans, who talked about our size, beauty, clothes, possible wealth and equally vital matters. His Highness did not reappear, but towards noon, when we came back to our steamer, one of the officers showed us what the Sultan had sent in return for our gratuitous petrol—a large wicker basket, plaited after the local fashion, holding several dozen richly-coloured melons, dates, figs, plums and other fruit—certainly a regal gift in what is after

all nothing but a desert settlement. At lunch every European did full honour to the ruler's present, and seldom have I found so delightful a flavour in orchard produce.

Late in the day we sailed out of the little bay for Aden. First Mokallah's capital, then the country's mountains faded into the horizon.

CHAPTER V

UP THE RED SEA

THROUGHOUT the forty-eight hours during which we travelled to the British coaling station, the Lieutenant busily thought out excuses for overstaying his furlough. He would be three days late, but everybody told him that the inefficiency of our ship was in the nature of an Act of God and entirely beyond his control. Restlessly, however, the officer stalked up and down the deck when the ancient volcanic crater which now holds the harbour of Aden lay before the ship. On the first medical launch that came towards the steamer arrived a man in uniform who, upon mounting the companion-way, proved to be a Colonel. "Is Lieutenant —— here?" he asked. The victim stepped out and saluted.

"Well," mused the regimental commander, "I suppose you know that six military gentlemen are waiting for you on shore?"

"Yes, sir," answered the Lieutenant, and explained why the ship was overdue.

"You'd better get ready," said the Colonel.

Meanwhile the Captain on the bridge had been watching, and presently I noticed the Lieutenant skimming down the ladder with a document in his hand.

"This is not my own Colonel," he whispered to me. "I have just got a note from the Old Man explaining about the bad boilers." I certainly felt sorry for the poor fellow, but afterwards heard that his "excuse" (modelled in its tenor upon those used by school children) was accepted at the Court Martial, and before the *Islamic* left the holiday-maker became quite happy again. For several years after I received Christmas cards from this officer, who now holds a big position in the British Army.

I had a look at the town and found one common allegation about Aden incorrect. Geography books aver that no plants of any kind take root upon its rock. Among the flat-roofed houses, however, I discovered a place where pepper trees were growing, red bunches of the sharp flavoured berries dangling amid their fern-like foliage.

"So," I said to an Englishman working at the Cable Station, "you *have* got vegetation here."

"Certainly," answered the resident with pride, "we blasted out some holes in the rock and imported the earth from India!"

As for grass there is not a blade thereof in this corner of Arabia.

"Cain's Tomb" was a little-known oddity, shown me by a local imam. Halfway down a cliff, in a spot which no man could possibly approach, I saw a distant recess surprisingly like an Egyptian funeral cave. If created by Nature it constituted an astounding freak.

My ship stayed in the roadstead, and while I was

looking over its side a boat approached from the shore bringing two tropically-dressed Europeans, who introduced themselves as explorers coming from a little trek in the mountains of Tibet. They were not going to England direct, but first intended to make a jaunt through the Sudan. One traveller in particular knew most interesting yarns about lamas, and brick tea and yaks.

"We get off at Suakin," he said, while explaining their further plans. This town, built upon the Sudan coast, became the British headquarters during the war against the Fuzzy-Wuzzies, and it happened that I possessed an Egyptian friend there. I told the explorers and offered to introduce them to the man.

"The very fellow we want," my companions exclaimed delightedly, and during a voyage of nearly nine hundred miles through the Red Sea, both showed their keenness to oblige. They gave me a little white ornament, something like a buckle shaped as a fantastic face and carved from the bones of a Tibetan priest. I still own the uncanny-looking article; its reverse shows the actual pitted markings which were formerly filled with human marrow.

Daylight in this region was so scorching that everybody except the lascars and one or two specially toughened white officers lolled in the shadiest corner they could find. Only when evening fell did the Red Sea grow less insufferable and then the explorers and I swopped notes on curious lands and people. They thought my visit to Mecca far more risky than anything

possible in Tibet, since Lhasa had been captured by Sir Francis Younghusband. For themselves the ultimate goal of their desires seemed to be the Royal Geographical Society, before whom the couple planned to lecture once London Town saw them again.

Suakin looked as dry, glary and old as ever I saw it. Along a land-spit its alleys rambled, and beyond the coast still appeared the perplexingly beautiful mirages, lakes, fountains, minarets and other non-existent enchantments. I took my friends ashore and introduced them to the Egyptian, who well recalled Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward. He agreed to act as their guide on a fairly lengthy trip in return for good payment; thus everybody felt happy.

Upon the foreshore I discovered that the old rusty machines once used to condense fresh water for the troops had not yet been removed. They and the house of the British Consul seemed the only sights in all the wretched town. King George's representative, poor man, showed delight about the arrival of some temporary companions. We sat on his verandah sipping iced drinks, and for many hours gave accounts of our lives. The Mecca scheme failed to impress the Consul. "My dear chap," he said, "to begin with you will not be allowed to land at Jeddah."

With doleful feelings the explorers learnt that trains for the Sudan interior only travelled twice a week; the next one would steam off in two days' time, and until then they were marooned by the shores of the Red Sea.

Before the much-desired conveyance became due, the *Islamic* carried me away in the direction of Port Sudan.

Unlike Suakin, this is a brand-new place, founded since England captured the Mahdi's country. Although the wharves are up-to-date, the town well-built and clean and general trade growing, I almost preferred the more venerable and disreputable city, which better suited the tastes of a roamer like myself. Port Sudan's solitary attraction is the particularly clear and blue sea-water.

For the benefit of pilgrims the nose of the ship no longer pointed north, but east. We steered towards Jeddah.

I sat downstairs when the anchor-chains suddenly rumbled and an engineer said: "Well, Mr. Churchward, here you are almost at your destination."

On the Indian deck there started a great packing of pots, portable stoves, babies and sacks of rice. Ere I went into my cabin to get my own traps ready, I took a glance at Jeddah. To my surprise I hardly saw it. A long, glary coastline faintly showed tall, white, flat-topped houses through a shivering heat-haze. The steamer was moored several miles out to sea and this distance, combined with the mirage, made my earliest impression of Sacred Arabia literally vague.

The first visitors from such a town naturally drew the attention of everybody on the ship. A boat appeared on the waters and came towards us. It carried a deputation of Turks, handsome, dignified fellows with big dark moustaches and fair skins. In the characteristic manner

which I have already mentioned they saluted the Captain, who asked what he could do for them.

"It is about the water supply," explained the interpreter.

"Oh, the condenser," replied the skipper.

A nod from our visitors confirmed the surprise. I knew Jeddah lacked wells and the surgeon whispered that in order to make the sea-water drinkable a distilling plant had been put up. Lately, our visitors told us, its output suddenly became brackish and finally the machine even refused to move. Would somebody please call and have a look at it? Captain Green courteously assented and the Turks steered home again.

While I swiftly crammed my clothes, books, shaving utensils and other baggage into a pair of suit-cases the yelling Indian Hajis let themselves be rowed landwards.

My turn to leave came several hours later. One or two officers looked into the cabin and disappointedly told me that the white ducks I had put on were most unbecoming for a pilgrim.

"What's wrong with them?" I asked.

"Surely," remarked one, "you ought to wear a silk dressing-gown and a sky-blue turban fitted with diamonds."

"You just wait," I soothed. "Before my trip is finished I will look as Oriental as you can wish."

Green himself saw me off. "Churchward," he insisted, "I'm bringing you ashore," and he most carefully supervised the lowering of my boxes towards his gig.

We had some handshaking on the deck and all the crew wished me luck.

Going through the spray aboard a small boat is not very delightful, but the lascars pulled their oars slowly and methodically, using the gradual increase of the surf as we got nearer the shore to add to our speed.

"What is that?" I asked, when we still floated some way from the lines of tall buildings above the wave crests. A biggish and formidable-looking vessel, rigged on a somewhat old-fashioned plan, loomed just to the right. "I thought one could only anchor at sea."

The Captain explained the story of the ship. "Seven or eight years ago," he said, "the Turkish Navy sent this cruiser to Jeddah on some business or other. After it had arrived, the Sublime Porte forgot all about the visit until lately, when the Captain got orders to go home. Thereupon the cruiser tried to move but the crew found the hull was about as firmly anchored as Asia herself. Coral had grown up all around it and so the Sultan's ship can stay here for ever."

With curiosity I studied the man-of-war while we went past. Sailors still lived on board and washing hung on the line in the good old Thames house-boat fashion.

By now one could distinguish the windows and parapets on the houses, which looked like domino stones, flecked with square, instead of circular, spots.

A sudden, heaving roller of particular strength lifted the gig up and shot it on, on, on nearer and nearer to a white shelf of beach.

The lascars pulled their dripping oars into the rowlocks and allowed the sea to bear us straight up the foreshore and on a sliding bank of shingle near high-water mark.

Swish, swish, the ocean pulled and tugged round our keel while the backwash raced down the slope again. But we clung safely to the sand of Jeddah, and the first part of Mobarek's pilgrimage had ended.

CHAPTER VI

JEDDAH

JEDDAH is Arabia's sky-scraper town. When I stood upon its beach, and turned away from the vista of our ship and the absurd coral-anchored warship, I looked on hundreds of buildings with six, eight, even nine storeys, very massive and of the block-like shape the Yankees preferred before they adopted zoning laws. Every house possessed a collection of verandahs, sometimes as many as half a dozen, stacked above each other and all of differing shapes. Little of the regularity one notices in the square structures of Uncle Sam's cities existed here—straight, oblique, parallel and at right angles the houses were ranged. All merged into a skyline as crooked and picturesque as anything on this Old Globe.

Before he would let me go into the streets whose shadowy entrances opened nearby, Captain Green insisted that I should help to inspect the Jeddah waterworks. Along the sands stood a small reddish shanty which I found was constructed of coral mortared together. Amid a dingy machinery hall we discovered a European mechanic with his feet spread out and smoking a pipe.

This fellow spoke English. When we told him how the Turk had complained that the condenser would not work, his guffaws lasted several minutes.

"Not working! Ha! Ha! Ha! Very surprising ain't it, very surprising indeed."

"But," asked the Captain, "Tell us the joke."

The engineer gripped each of us by a sleeve and marched through the quiet yet well-kept plant. Before a large steel boiler he halted. "See here," he exclaimed unhooking a metal door; "that's the furnace; look inside."

We did so and found an inky cavern. "The blighters expected this outfit, as good a one as you will ever see, to keep going without coal!"

Leaving the indignant technician, the pair of us marched towards the town. Its streets held much filth and few people. I particularly noticed the rarity of women, nearly all of whom stayed behind the gorgeously carved and arabesqued harem shutters that hung above our heads.

In a coffee-house squatted one or two of the deputation which had called at the ship. The Captain whispered that they should come outside, and there he disclosed the origin of the trouble in the distillery.

"Is *that* what your machines do?" exclaimed the Turks with blatant disgust. "They are as bad as men; you need to feed them."

Green confessed that this was indeed the case.

"The machine is bad," muttered the complainants, and proceeded to break the news at the Wali's or Gover-

nor's house. Water, I may add, never tasted very well during my two sojourns at Jeddah. It was peculiarly brackish, and citizens preferred it diluted in coffee or sherbet.

For some time we meandered about like proper tourists, not like an experienced sea captain and a pilgrim. The interest of the town held one at first sight. Boys played venerable games beside the booths of merchants who traded with Hajis. Camels were parked as motor cars would be in Western cities. Every house-top showed a different set of ornaments; some were trellised, others sawtoothed, a third lot machicolated like a medieval castle.

Business looked slack, since the pilgrimage season which follows after the movable month of Ramadan had ended. The date of this last-mentioned fasting period must be adjusted according to the phases of the moon and the attention given to astronomy in the East is largely due to the need for appropriate calculations.

None of the Jeddans spoke to us or even stared at the unusual callers. They languidly bought and sold, ate and drank, taught and learnt, amid the dusky porches of their buildings.

An hour passed. The Captain pulled out a watch and said: "Mr. Churchward, I've got to see to my ship. Good-bye and good luck."

We gave each other a typical British handshake below the eaves of those Oriental houses and then I followed a street towards the English Consulate.

"How can any white man stay the whole year in such a place?" I asked myself while walking past mosques and madressas (schools) to the higher portion of the town. Presently the good old Union Jack flapped across the end of an alley. Beneath it I saw a big house, flat-roofed, very lofty, with the Lion and the Unicorn prancing above its door.

I knocked and a servant brought me into an office where sat a burly Briton with a slight beard and very thin clothing.

"Hallo! Hallo!" he called with obvious pleasure, "what on earth brings you here? I am just off to England owing to the heat."

Once again I explained who I was and what I wanted.

"Good Lord, man," the Consul said, "surely you're not going to Mecca as Burton did?" The scornful smile on the official's face no longer impressed me because I had seen such expressions too frequently.

"Here," answered I, "is a letter of introduction, addressed to the Shereefah Zain Wallie of Jeddah."

Of course His Britannic Majesty's representative could read Arabic, and he quickly skimmed the paper.

"Do you know," he asked, "that the addressee is a woman?"

I said I did, but I was not aware it would be necessary to see her personally. Might not her assistants own the needful authority? "To begin with," pleaded the Consul, "I cannot stand the heat and I don't know how you can. If you want to try this nonsense, you mustn't talk to me about it any longer, because my boat is

due at any moment. I will introduce you to Dr. Abdur Rahman, my understudy and an awfully decent man."

A servant went off to fetch this member of the Diplomatic Service. In a short time a tall Indian arrived, clean-shaven and wearing gold spectacles on his brown face. From his fez I saw that he must be a Moslem. We shook hands, whereupon the doctor in a courteous, gentlemanly way asked what he could do for me.

"Your matter may take a few days to arrange," he spoke, "and until then I hope you will do me the favour of staying at my house, which is some distance from the Consular Building."

Very gladly I accepted, and took a friendly leave of the Englishman who immediately turned again to the filling of his trunks.

Dr. Abdur Rahman (pronounced Abdur Raaman) lived in good style, in a tall building whose flat roof was, as a privilege, given to me for sleeping. Offices and living rooms were designed in the Indian style, extremely large, thick-walled and fitted with punkahs and shutters. Each passage and landing held several Arab servants and I had to be careful not to make mistakes and get into the harem.

At meals the Vice-Consul, a former surgeon in a Lucknow hospital, asked me many questions, and told some interesting facts about Jeddah. He related how some years earlier the English, French, Spanish and one or two other foreign representatives decided to go shooting gazelles amid the coastal hills. Mahomedan

friends warned them not, on any account, to pass beyond the limits which Desert Bedouins tacitly acknowledge as being accessible for infidels. They rode off with their guns; the hunt grew thrilling and most of them pressed on too far. Days later two Britishers arrived back, the only men who had escaped the freebooters' bullets.

About the Shereefah Zain Wallie I already knew something. She was the widow of a Meccan sage who figured in the following strange story, which all South African Malays claim is completely true, but which I have never yet seen set out in print.

While Abdul Mallik, a Cape Town Moslem, whom I know myself, was a boy, his parents sent him to the Holy City in order that he might there learn the Faith from its most authoritative teachers. After accomplishing the Haj, the father took his lad to the house of a stately greybeard.

"Shereef Syed Zain Wallie, this is my son, about whom I told you," said the South African, while they sat on divans drinking coffee, "he will, I am sure, become a good pupil and I pray you, as an old friend, treat him like your son."

Courteously the host eyed the nervous lad who fumbled at a white robe. "He shall live among my own family," he promised.

The youth soon liked the sedate house, which he was to inhabit for many moons. His father rode coastwards and returned to Africa while Abdul passed long hours every day in a courtyard, where the Syed Zain Wallie

lectured to several youths. Amongst them squatted the learned man's own sons, but in kindness the teacher did not differentiate between these and the youngster from distant Africa.

Sura by sura the class went through the Koran chapters—discussing, expounding, and finally memorising the sacred verses.

Naturally the long-gowned students, who crossed their legs and rocked to and fro as they chanted out the lines, were not equally proficient.

Within a few months it became obvious that Abdul Mallik surpassed all the others in those gifts the Moslems respect most. Proudly the Matof called in aged sheikhs from Damascus, or passing Mirzas out of Persia, or Indian scribes dressed according to the custom of Delhi that the pilgrims might hear the prodigy reciting many pages of Arabic at a breath.

"Another Hafiz is growing up," called the admiring listeners. "Allah grants us another man who knows the Holy Book by heart."

Folk who walked past the tall grey house in the narrow street near the Kaaba looked grave one day. Shrieks and moanings behind the barred windows told that someone had died and that the professional mourning women already waited.

"Who has gone to Paradise?" some scribe asked a slave at the door and the answer came: "The Syed Zain Wallie."

With all the stringent ceremony of Islam the old Matof was borne towards the Mecca graveyard which

is the one place where every Moslem longs to be buried. Friends who carried the body in accordance with venerable custom filed up the bleak hills outside the town, the necessary prayers were said and the soul of Zain Wallie passed to the Houris' Bowers.

The time came to open the sealed document that held the scholar's will. All the relatives, the cadi, the dead sage's friends arrived and sat on divans, waiting for the tidings.

"In the name of Allah," the bearded reader commenced the proclamation of the old man's testamentary wishes.

One asset after another was disposed of--to an elder son went the perfumed books, to an ancient friend some beautiful carpets, to a brother an embroidered curtain. So the chattels of Zain Wallie passed. Most pupils and even the slaves had been thought of.

Yet the droning voice behind the prayer-mat did not mention a young Cape Town fellow, the boy who the Matof held almost dearer than a child.

Houses, slippers, scrolls with precious manuscripts were finished. Then the reader announced: "To my beloved Abdul Mallik, the ring with the milk-coloured stone. May it bring blessing."

"A strange gift, a very strange gift," spoke all the Meccans after they saw the little piece of jewellery, so unpretentious, nay shabby, after the splendid legacies of other heirs. They leant their faces over it and fingered the simple hoop.

But an Imam with white hair walked majestically towards the somewhat dismayed boy. "Zain Wallie, peace be with him, was a wise man. And he loved you well. My son, this present, though we know not its nature, is worth much. Be thankful and honour the Syed's memory."

Abdul was a sensible youth and nodded respectfully. While he stood by the window looking on the shuttered harem, other folk came and said that the stone in the ring probably had medicinal powers.

"Do we not sell all kinds of gems at the bazaar as cures for bad eyes, and baldness and unfruitfulness in women?" said a merchant. Abdul was advised to wear the ring at all times.

Thursday night becomes a very busy season in Mahomedan cities, for the next day citizens must be clean and prepared for worship.

Abdul Mallik, like his friends, bathed and washed himself and went for a shave. He entered a little shop in which any barber mentioned in the Arabian Nights might have worked, a room with basins and ewers and long sharp razors on the shelves above the divans.

Squatting upon the carpet the young man let the barber lather his scalp. This time the hairdresser seemed very unskilful. The usually swift and even artistic craftsman kept murmuring curses, fumbling about Abdul Mallik's skull and keeping the other customers waiting. "May Shaitan fetch the smith who forged this," he presently cried and began to

flick his razor up, down, up, down, a long shiny strop.

"Now again." The boy's head grew so full of soap that the lather oozed on to his robe. Boldly the blade swung across the bristles—and failed to cut.

"It is magic," called the barber tugging a black moustache. "Look at this!" The razor was so keen that it went through one of the worker's hairs without pressure.

Other customers felt impatient and reviled the man. "We will go to the next shop," threatened one, walking to get his shoes at the door.

"Brother," pleaded the barber, "this boy's head is bewitched." All now hurried to watch the razor glide over the bristles without cutting. A man looked at the puzzled Hafiz.

"It's Abdul Mallik from Africa," cried a deep voice and the youth noted the merchant who had attended the will-reading ceremony. "Of course, of course. A holy man owns wonderful things. Did I not tell you," he eagerly leant over the seated boy, "That little ring was worth more than all the other legacies."

"The ring," echoed Abdul, "what magic does it possess?"

As an answer the merchant pulled the band with the milky-hued jewel off young Mallik's finger and waved to the barber. "Now try and shave him," he cried.

By this time all kinds of loungers, beggars, water-carriers, etc., from the bazaar crowded the shop. Self-

importantly the hairdresser smeared the soap and started anew.

The razor cut perfectly!

In the presence of responsible people, including townsmen of Abdul's, the power of the Matof's jewel had been revealed. As long as it was on one's person every Moslem swore no blade could hurt the wearer.

Naturally the news traversed the city in an hour. A day later guests at caravanserais amid the coastal towns discussed the wondrous charm, and after a week Bedouin sheikhs and bandit chieftains, learned physicians and astrologers hurried over the desert towards Mecca wanting to buy the Matof's legacy.

Abdul became a man whom the gravest mullahs saluted as a friend. Everlastingly he got requests to try knives, scimitars, Ghurka kris while wearing the ring. The effects never differed. Plenty of respectable coloured folk living in Cape Town still testify thereto.

Sacks with money had been brought to the door of the Hafiz' house. Amounts equivalent to several thousand pounds, enormous sums in a poor country like Arabia, were tendered, but the Malay always refused them.

By this time Abdul Mallik's studies were about finished, and he was deemed an ornament for the greatest communities—Baghdad, Stamboul, Delhi or Samarkand.

Nevertheless the young man determined to return where he was born. His old father still lived at the

Mosque in Dorp Street, Cape Town, and long, flowery Arabic epistles urged him to keep the family's association with Africa's oldest mosque.

After many formal visits of farewell, after obtaining sonorous blessings, the Hafiz trekked to Jeddah.

Great were the merrymakings in the coloured suburbs below Table Mountain when Abdul Mallik, the pupil of Syed Zain Wallie, returned to the house of his boyhood. All the local Imams and elders knew about the strange, magic ring.

Presently the scholar, who became a professional reciter of the entire Koran during the High Festivals, saw a photograph of a very pretty Malay girl. To take such a picture, especially when the maiden has her face unveiled, is a contravention of orthodox usage, but this particular lass was so attractive (the pure Cape Malays are a good-looking race) that the young Hafiz begged her parents to make her his wife.

With a banquet and a flower-covered bride-litter, a visit to the mosque by the groom and all the other picturesque ritual of African Islam, the two were married. As a pledge of his troth Abdul Mallik put the Matof's ring upon the girl's finger.

"Brother," said his friends when they later saw the wife at housework with the milky stone gleaming on her hand, "see she scrubs, she washes clothes, she bakes and makes sweetmeats while wearing that jewel. Can she know its magic powers?"

"Probably she does," spoke Abdul. "I love her and she is worthy of having it."

Though the Hafiz never definitely told the woman she soon enough surmised that this was the famous ring. "When I cut bread I must take it off," she told friends and showed that the knife would not traverse the loaf while it was on.

One evening the goodwife came to her husband much distressed. "It is lost," she wailed. "When I soaped the clothes on the rocks up the mountain my finger held the magic ring. Now it has vanished."

All the neighbours came to search the river pools where the Malay women do their laundry work, the house in Dorp Street, the mosque.

It was gone, once and for all.

Abdul Mallik is still living, a grizzled man as positive about the magic powers of his ring as he is of being alive. Crowds of Moslems who still walk this earth saw its qualities exercised.

To enter into business relations with the widow of a man who possessed a real Arabian Night's charm certainly appeared a fascinating adventure for a man in this century.

After about eight or nine lazy days, the doctor commanded one of his innumerable servants to fetch the Shereefah's Wakeel or major domo. Smiling and salaaming the venerable, turbaned Imam arrived.

He read my letter of introduction which was addressed to his mistress in her hereditary capacity as Matof (Pilgrim Guide). Owing to the immense numbers of pilgrims, hundreds of thousands, who reach Jeddah each year, it is as impossible for these much-respected

dignitaries to escort their customers personally as it would be for Mr. Thomas Cook to chaperone every Cockney globe-trotter through Europe. Like all her colleagues she employed a considerable staff, headed by our visitor, who saw that Hajis carried through the ritual prescribed by Mahomet. A Wakeel must be very learned in the religion and know every rule in its smallest particulars. To this dignified General Agent, I now surrendered control of my movements. He quickly appreciated the fact that I was a completely bona fide pilgrim and, after hearing Dr. Rahman say he hoped we might meet again in a few months, I put on my Eastern clothes, a shirt, wide drawers, a coloured silk sash, gown and Bedouin head-dress and went down the alleys towards the great guest-house which belonged to the Matof. On the way the Wakeel explained that the Shereefah had her headquarters in Mecca where she at present lived, but that she would be advised when I was coming.

Many windows fronted the street on which the religious caravanserai showed its long white façade. Slaves led me through a broad front portal calling for blessings and with my entry into a private ground-floor chamber the pilgrimage officially commenced.

Adjoining the comfortably large, cushioned bedroom was a little hall which held an elaborate bath surmounted by taps and several showers. Ceremonious washing took place here, and I stripped so as to let jets of cold Jeddah water rinse worldly uncleanness off my body. Several blacks stood by the handles of the

taps and so nicely regulated the flow that soap hardly became needful. The Koran declares Believers should use flowing streams, not stagnant pools for washing. That is why swimming baths, unless water can run through continually, are never built in the Moslem East. At Jeddah, however, one sometimes beheld muscular Arabs wading in the ocean surf without feeling the want of any costume.

On the marble floor of the bathroom I stood while slaves helped to rub my limbs with Mahomedan soap, which must not contain animal fat, for there is always a possibility that something from the swine has been utilized. Special brands, made solely out of vegetable ingredients, are sold in Mecca and other Arab towns. By my side waited the Wakeel superintending as though I had never yet taken a bath in my life before. The lathering of the "Kosher" soap is not by any means easily achieved and I felt really tired after my supper of dates and boiled fowl and evening prayers at a nearby mosque, surprisingly small and shabby in view of the gigantic pilgrim traffic.

My room contained a cane bedstead on which I stretched myself, but the cavernous apartment under its heavy hangings, remained so nightmarishly hot that I could do nothing except roll painfully about the plaited surface. Jumping up in my flapping night-shirt I pulled away the casement and looked on the highway; yonder the air was relatively cool. Without ado I lifted the light stretcher across my shoulder and carried it into the street.

Finding a level place on the irregular stones I lay down anew. This time a thousand million mosquitoes hovered over me and I regretfully thought about my failure to get a net as friends had advised at Bombay. The road remained totally without traffic and silent as only an Oriental night can be. Not a lamp appeared on all the sinister houses that gleamed in the starlight. A few distant dogs sometimes bayed, but otherwise the only sound one heard in Jeddah was the combined roaring of its mosquitoes and the sea. Nevertheless I must have gone to sleep because after a while the clatter of hooves at my side made me jump out of a doze. The sky still looked dark but in the direction of Mecca men could see the grey caused by a coming dawn. Galloping up the kerb a herd of goats went, without a shepherd, to be milked.

On completing the morning prayers I asked the Wakeel about the asses which were to take me towards the Kaaba. Dr. Abdur Rahman, he reported, kept declaring I ran a great risk in going at all, and he thought the less notice my departure drew the safer matters would be. Hence it had been planned that two donkeys should leave towards the evening and travel right through the night.

"Why can't I go by camel?" I inquired.

"Because the asses take half the time," explained the resident and so I approved the arrangements.

In the Matof's house I spoke to hardly anybody, because most of the folk living there understood no Arabic except religious phrases and thus I was restricted

to the company of the Wakeel. Since certain financial arrangements had still to be made I called again on the Vice-Consul. Theoretically all pilgrims must enter Mecca in the same state, without money or even clothes but notwithstanding this stringent rule something has to be done about living expenses. Usually the pilgrim hands his cash to the Matof who keeps it until the journey is over. In my case, however, I had brought £250 and I did not feel inclined to put all that in my purse which, according to custom, the Wakeel would henceforth carry. The money therefore was deposited with Dr. Abdur Rahman and on my last morning in Jeddah he remitted a good portion of this to Mecca . . . by telegraph! For in the New East one can do such things, and the wires run from the seaport to the City of the Prophet. Consequently the Shereefah's servant only bore about £2 in small change, and at Mecca he handed this to his local colleague, who kept a very strict and honest account of the money. The whole system is certainly cumbrous, yet it possesses one advantage; on my entire journey I never once was expected to give tips.

About sunset I took final leave of my courteous consular helper and, going to the Matof's house, took another bath. Instead, however, of putting on my robes again the Wakeel gave me a simple Turkish towel which, folded (not tucked) over my loins remained the only covering to my nakedness for a good number of days to come. "Ekram" is the name of this wrapper which does not contravene the taboo against clothes

for pilgrims. I also kept some soft slippers and an umbrella.

While the lamps of Jeddah glowed in a tropic sunset, two donkeys arrived. From the sea whistled a salty wind that made my uncovered spine shiver, but the Wakeel exclaimed in Arabic: "Haji, do not feel cold, we will soon be far from here."

CHAPTER VII

ON THE ROAD TO MECCA

As I passed beyond the shadow of the eastward city gate, I suddenly appreciated that I now covered a road to which no European before me had undisputed access. The guide trotted taciturnly beside the flank of my beast and somehow I thought the man tactful. Just before twilight faded entirely the Wakeel pointed at several long, low mounds beside the stony trail.

"The Turks," he said, "tried to build a railway to Mecca some years ago, but every night the Bedouins came from the desert and pulled away the rails. So finally the Turks stopped and that embankment is all they ever finished."

For some minutes we cantered beside the collapsed earthworks; then we passed into darkness and I thought of the coming journey.

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"Oh ye who believe! It is only the idolaters who are unclean; they shall not then approach the Sacred Mosque or Kaaba after this year."

Thus spoke the Prophet in the Sura of Repentance delivered to the Koran scribes at Medina exactly one

thousand three hundred years ago. And since that remote date when he issued the foregoing prohibition every true Mussulman has striven to prevent the intrusion of all who uphold other religions to our Sacred Town. Dreadful acts have been done in Allah's name to maintain the inviolability of Mecca. Nobody who, like myself, has studied the underlying gentleness of the Koran, will believe that Mahomet countenanced the slayings, mutilations and forced conversions carried through on the few Christians who reached the city and were discovered yonder.

"Verily, the first House founded for men was surely that at Mecca for a blessing and a guidance to the world. There is due to God from man a pilgrimage unto the House for whosoever can find his way there." Anyone who fails to grasp the vital importance of these sacred sentences from the Book cannot live through the fervour felt by the pious when they merely hear the name of the city mentioned. Even Christians use it as a proverbial term for a much desired goal. With us Moslems the spot is never out of our minds more than a few hours. No sooner do we undertake one of the five daily prayers than we look in its direction.

"From whencesoever thou comest forth there turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque, for it is surely truth from the Lord: God is not careless about what ye do. And wheresoever ye are, turn your faces towards it."

Thus ordained Mahomet.

Without Mecca there could be no Islam. Indeed it

was already called "The Mother of Cities" a millennium before the Prophet cleansed the Kaaba of idols. But for all who believe the Koran the place has been immeasurably sanctified since it became the centre from which our entire religion was sent forth.

Fifty generations of Mussulmen have stood in the way of intruding infidels, severer and more uncompromising on this subject than on all others. Even the most orthodox Moslems know that some unbelievers did reach the town, but fanatics and liberals unite in their belief that there is something too intimate and sacred about Mecca to make the presence of those upholding other faiths desirable yonder.

.

I had been told that the journey of some forty miles could be done on donkeys in less than two days; thus I expected to arrive by the following sunset. My thanks went out to Dr. Abdur Rahman for planning the time of my journey as he had. The hooves of my mount struck thumpingly against slithering sand until I could feel the path changing to finely chipped rock.

"How good that we are not under the hot sun," I thought as the night wind flapped my ekram. Against the stars I saw rock faces; we seemed to be trotting through a kind of cañon. Saving the fall of our donkeys' feet there was nothing to be heard, not even the jackal which laughs through the nocturnal veldt in Africa. How the Wakeel found the track I do not know unless incessant trekking to and from the coast had taught

him to notice marks beyond ordinary eyesight. He carried no light and at times, when the shade grew dense, I had to follow the hoof-beats.

After several hours a noise of many people as in a bazaar sounded from the distance. Faintly flickering candle-glow showed reddish among the boulders and we suddenly galloped into a square surrounded by shapeless mud huts. "This is Mena, the watering place," explained my companion, "here we will rest." Figures moved in front of some windows and then I heard: "Halam Wa Salam!" meaning "Welcome." The speaker owned a café, a curious low-roofed hall in which a few of the 1,500 people who inhabit this village take their recreation. On my way home I saw it by daylight, and noticed that not a single window had any glass. Our host bowed us into the guest-room which held numerous little tables, each about eighteen inches high and covered with grass mats. We sat down on rugs and cushions piled along their sides, and presently a slave carried up a tray with a samovar of Russian design, surrounded by numerous little cups with spiced tea. On their surface floated tiny rose petals which one could clearly distinguish when the candle-light flickered thereon. Knowing the Arab's fondness for boiling drinks, I sipped very carefully and was not disappointed, for even the spoonful I took scalded my lips. While I waited for it to cool the coffee-house keeper put his bearded face close towards me and then said, "By Allah, he is a *Kafir*."

For a South African this word has a contemptuous meaning, since the native races are thus commonly

called. Here, however, amid the Orient, it simply signified a Westerner. I know that story-tellers, anxious to gain the Arabian Nights flavour for their stories, make the Moslems call Europeans "Franks." The expression is not absolutely wrong, because it resulted from the famous visit of Haroun al Raschid's ambassadors to Charlemagne, King of the Franks. Nowadays, however, the Eastern people seldom use it.

Hearing the host describe me as a Kafir several poorly clad customers arose and took a good stare at Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward. My Matof explained I was a true believer, and hereupon for some reason the Mena citizens thought me a man of importance. Several seized my hand, which they kissed before I could pull it away, in the manner etiquette required. Although it was the middle of the night, the local beggars had not yet closed down their business. Three or four arrived during the half-hour I stayed and the Wakeel took out my purse and gave them alms. Having done this he motioned outside with his long brown fingers and I knew that the time for leaving had come. We greeted the villagers in general and as I mounted the saddle again several of them could be heard speaking about the strangeness of my action in not joining the usual caravans. The fact that I employed my own private Matof, while everybody else shared such an official with a hundred companions, seemed to them a sign of high standing.

In the dim brightness of the comet and the stars I could now see my Wakeel nervily peering from side to

side. By this I knew that we must be entering a dangerous country.

Mountains of moderate height opened on either side and the donkeys trotted upwards. Tap! Tap! Tap! rang the hoof-beats. In front of us I noticed the commencing dawn.

Bang! Bang! Explosions suddenly rang from some place high in the dark hills. No mistake, those were rifle shots.

"Bedouins!" I thought at once. Where did they lie ambushed? It was not a pleasant feeling to realize that armed men crouched nearby ready to carry one into slavery. How could they know the European carried proper credentials? I flatter myself that I was not quite in such a funk as my friend the Wakeel, which gentleman continually pulled short the reins of his donkey. I could hear his teeth chattering.

The dawn turned yellow and red, but despite several minutes' pleading I was unable to make the guide even whisper what we should do next. In the grey light I saw his wide-pupilled eyes. No further shots fell, and after some time the Wakeel relaxed and said, "We must hide."

The growing brightness showed a very picturesque old building, a kind of tower several hundred feet above the road. It had loopholes and battlements like a medieval castle, being one of the forts which the Turks have erected every few miles along the road. From the steep path serving the structure some fez-adorned figures ran down. They wore uniforms and held guns in their hands.

"Cheer up, Wakeel," I suggested, "those are Turkish soldiers."

Presently I saw them lift their weapons and aim at the opposite hill among whose big rocks and clefts no Bedouins were, however, to be seen. Further shots echoed across the valley until a bugle rang.

By this time both of us decided to inquire about the safety of the road. A polite officer, busy recalling his men, in a most nonchalant fashion as though the incident were very ordinary, cried: "You are quite safe, Hajis, the robbers have run away."

Our path followed the bottom of a ravine for a good way, and along the sharply-outlined mountain crests we periodically discovered further forts.

The ekram gave me very little protection from the sun and I could feel how my skin was being scorched even in the early morning. Below two of the castles I saw travellers' wells. They were only pits in the hard soil, but in each case a Saffer Khan or Pilgrim hostel built of mud stood by their side. Here placid Arabs offered coffee which despite its heat proved a most delightful drink during a desert ride.

We must have ridden about twenty miles from Jeddah and the afternoon had already come when the trail turned behind a rise and I looked on two huge pillars about thirty feet in height. They were of whitewashed masonry eight or ten feet square at the base and resembled Egyptian obelisks save that they did not taper. Many chippings and marks of weathering by desert gales showed that the structure must be very old, but

I never got a satisfactory statement about their significance save as boundaries of the Haram or Sacred Ground. I suspect they were originally watch towers.

A circle running several miles beyond the limits of Mecca is Holy Soil and on entering it here my guide signed to me that we should say the proper prayer. Touching his heart and forehead he muttered the Fatiah and held his hands together as if to receive Heaven's blessing. Then he said, "Hennar al Haram" (Here is the Holy Ground). I followed his salute and purposely intoned the Koran verses with particular loudness so that he could see I understood the ritual.

Despite the sacredness of the soil there was no change in the barren hill ranges, which reminded me of Namaqualand in South Africa because their outlines, even though distant, looked incredibly sharp in the clean, dry air.

Some pigeons, wild doves and other birds were the first specimens of desert fauna I came on. They appeared perfectly tame, and fluttered a few inches from our faces. Some sat on the hard stones and allowed the donkeys to go right upon them. Very cautiously the Wakeel led his beast round the little creatures, for no man will dare to kill a living thing here.

Along the slopes on our left I noticed tall poles with the unmistakable porcelain insulators which belong to a telegraph line. It was but of a single wire and the property of the Turkish Government. To keep the installation undamaged by the tribesmen stories were

spread about the fearsome deaths afflicting any man who touched its equipment.

I coughed very often since the road turned into soft sand, a dreary yellow that makes travellers shut their eyes. Not one grass tuft grew in all that country.

Another Saffer Khan appeared halfway up a rise. I stopped for a moment in order to buy another luscious cup of coffee; then the Wakeel and I hurried to the crest of that small ridge. Our donkeys panted, they seemed distressingly slow, but the skyline began to sink in front of us and a few minutes later I could look over it. Below lay Mecca.

CHAPTER VIII

SETTLING DOWN AT MECCA

A THOUSAND yards away I saw a city which is completely inaccessible to fifteen hundred millions of the world's inhabitants, and which, moreover, is the devotional centre for two hundred million other folk. I had expected it would have aroused in me some kind of tingling thrill. Yet when I viewed Mecca from the last bump on the coastal highroad it suddenly looked nothing but a large, crammed, Oriental town, with divers minarets and cupolas perched over tangled, flat roofs and all around a ring of brown, nude, scorched hills, not very steep and averaging several hundred feet in height. Out of their summits grew walls of narrow-windowed masonry and sturdy roofs that peered slightly above the boulders. Red flags flapped amid the hot breeze and now and then their folds unrolled to show the Star and Crescent of the Stamboul Sultan. Yonder lay the ramparts behind which a Turkish garrison protected Mecca from any infidel power.

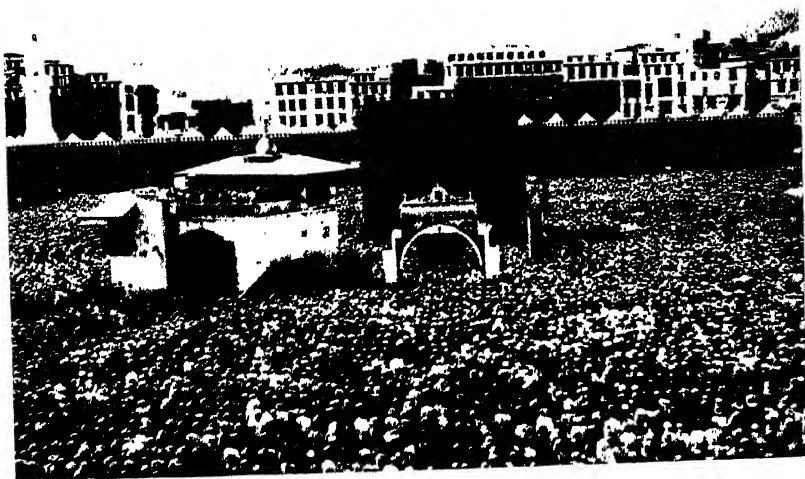
Vainly I turned my eyes on the town again in order to distinguish its Kaaba, the focus for mosques and prayer mats in every Continent.

Anyone who has ever entered a Moslem place of



THE FORBIDDEN CITY OF MECCA

A unique view of the focal centre of Islam. The great square in the foreground holds the Kaaba. The city is commanded by fortified hills. On them "loban" is found, an extraordinary kind of rock which emits a heavy sweet scent when burnt.



WORSHIPERS ROUND THE KAABA

This photo, which was taken at a tremendous risk, shows the huge array of pilgrims around the Kaaba at prayer-time. The building on the left is the Well of Haggar. When leaving Mecca it is customary for the pilgrims to retreat from the Holy of Holies backwards.

worship must have noticed a little niche beside which stand the steps from which the imam leads the service. This is the Meerab. Mahomedans look towards it while praying, for its cautiously calculated position shows the direction of the holiest building in Mecca.

Whether in a little Transvaal country town, on a Natal sugar farm, in an African east coast bazaar, in a Madagascar village, in the fanatic cities of Morocco, in the Indian hills, on Sumatra oilfields, in the forbidden countries of Central Asia, in Southern Russia, in Turkey, in the mouldering fortresses of Moldavia or even in London or Peking or New York,—wherever you go there is a Meerab facing one temple in the Sacred City of the East which now stretched below me.

With gradual excitement I sought to find that wonderful spot for the sake of which I had trekked halfway round the world, the Haram, or enclosure within which rests the Kaaba Stone. The Wakeel showed me certain roofs and minarets almost on my eye-level. They belonged, he said, to the Holy of Holies, but owing to hundreds of intervening houses nothing was distinguishable of the famous little building into whose façade the Stone that fell from Heaven has been mortared.

Part of Mecca is walled. We kicked our bare heels into the flanks of the donkeys and these swiftly galloped us towards a rampart broken by a tall Moorish archway. Hawkers sat on a sand-dune playing some game while they rested from their salesmanship. They looked up idly as we trotted by and greeted us.

Under the vaulted gatehouse, broad enough to let many camels go through side by side, I hurried, and reached the shuttered booths of Mecca's bazaar. Every narrow street lay shaded—a pleasing surprise. Awnings of woven palm-leaves hung over each thoroughfare, and had not dazzling strips of sunlight reached the ground between the joints, one might have thought the city's trading district was established indoors. No plants of any kind grow in the town, so the long branches out of which these shelters are made must be imported from Taif, ninety miles up-country, "in the Hills," as men would say in India. It constitutes the Simla of Mecca, the place where rick folk go in hot weather.

Softly the donkeys' hooves padded on the smooth dung and dirt heaps which lay beside the shops. At street crossings, the awnings did not hang closely and I saw that the buildings, as in Jeddah, were very high and also possessed the picturesque carved shutters and verandahs of the coast town. No rise or fall in the surface of the ground was noticeable and I presently discovered the Mecca valley lay practically level.

Smoking long hookahs or water pipes on the steps of their premises squatted the white-robed merchants. Some rose to cry: "Good watches, by Allah"; others yelled: "Pearls, pearls of Paradise!"; a third fellow vended lemons; "Lemons for True Believers!" Round some corners ran half-naked, muscular water-carriers, who held sewn goatskins of liquid round their hips, and carried their wares into various houses.

Besides the gowned people who occasionally gaped at me I also noticed soldiers in Turkish uniforms. They were laughing, good-natured Anatolians, Kurds, Druses and other queer tribesmen. Indeed the troops needed a bright disposition to survive what their superiors inflicted on them. At the moment most rankers walked loaded under packages. One fellow carried a sack of rice, his friend a pocket of flour, a third had a joint of red raw meat weighing perhaps thirty or forty pounds. Each of these articles constituted the bearer's ration for a whole month. Of course in the Mecca climate the meat could not last twelve hours, yet the Sublime Porte insisted that every trooper must receive thirty days' food in one lump. I watched the soldiers going from booth to booth hawking their absurd food. People seemed quite used to buying it, and I think the better-hearted ones gave a little more than the actual value, for the proceeds which the sellers obtain are all they have to keep themselves from starving. Save among the officers, military smartness was not evident in Mecca. Every Tommy got his clothes and footwear irrespective of measurements. Often boots had to be slit open to let their owners put them on, while hundreds of other pairs were packed with straw lest they should fall off. I have seen a man wearing a greatcoat with a four or five inch tuck across the back; in another case a brawny Kurd made a big slit between the shoulders in an effort to wear his cloak. Still the soldiers did not mind, and as long as they possessed cigarettes they remained as cheerful as anybody I ever met. The officers were very

gentlemanly and their uniforms appeared as neat as even I, an old Aldershot boy, could wish. By an ingenious scheme the Turkish authorities arranged that only Moslems who had never been to Mecca were put in the garrison. Thus they became Hajis in the course of their ordinary military duties, the commanders taking care that the prescribed ritual at the Kaaba was properly carried out.

All the buildings stand with their narrow fronts adjoining tightly, like parcels on a grocer's shelves. Consequently they are very high, five to eight storeys being usual, and in many places the façades curve owing to the twist of the street.

Before I had ridden very far from the Jeddah Gate, my donkey gave his first exhibition of the temperament for which these animals are characteristic. A certain corpulent Koran dealer who filled much of the frontage to his shop was blinking at us when suddenly my beast started walking straight towards him and a moment later sent the Meccan toppling among the books, even starting to put its front feet within the warehouse.

"Can you not keep back your ass of Shaitan," not unreasonably shouted the indignant merchant. I very candidly replied that I could not. The old fellow stood up and rubbed himself.

"Well, well," said he, "you are a Haji and I know many have not ridden before."

I smiled at him for his good nature and while we trekked further I decided to buy a Koran at this shop some time. For these holy volumes numerous special

stalls exist. Most copies are printed at Calcutta and they cost very little, seldom more than tenpence a copy. Strictly speaking my religion does not allow Korans to be sold at all, and the doctors have ascertained that a Believer might quite legitimately go into a store and demand the Book gratis. Though this hardly ever occurs, the dealers fear it might happen, so they find a sufficiency in small profits.

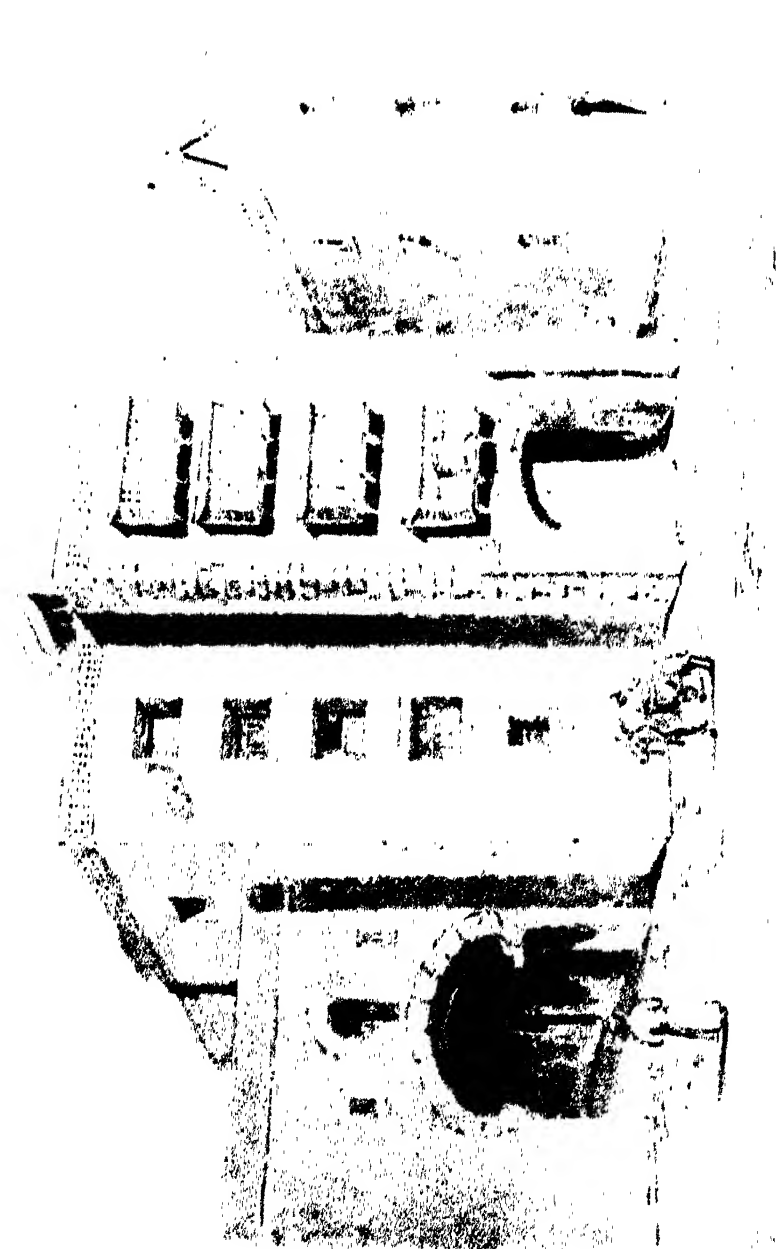
Beyond the Bazaar I was lucky enough to see a new house being built, a very uncommon spectacle in Mecca. Though sixty thousand people inhabit the town the figure hardly grows. Residents rarely move away and even more seldom does a man from outside come to the Holy City as anything but a pilgrim. Local masons practise a peculiar system of construction, unlike all methods I ever saw elsewhere. They do not imitate the Laputans in *Gulliver's Travels*, who started with the roof; instead they first erect the four walls separately, so that each can stand by itself. Only at the very end of the operations do the builders fit in the corners. Some obscure religious idea, probably connected with the intrusion of evil spirits, gave rise to this habit.

I felt glad to be mounted, since the tracks, four or five feet wide, which folk here call streets, hold many inches of dirt. During our progress to the Matof's house, where I was to live while at Mecca, I noticed that most alleys held little traffic. Throughout the proper pilgrim season this of course is vastly different. Innumerable thousands then bargain with the bazaar

dealers and hawkers of rosaries or other pious souvenirs. Now, however, the roads were chiefly frequented by children who played leap-frog in a surprisingly English kind of way. They looked merry youngsters, not by any means overdressed. Tops of an indigenous kind seemed much in favour; they work without strings or whips as would be the case in Europe. Many of the yelling boys and girls carried on a game that involved the skilful jerking of a ball with both heels. Meccan children usually behave very respectfully to grown people, a fact due to their strict schooling, which is principally taken up with the study of the Koran.

Women did occasionally go by, but I think there must have been five times as many males abroad. Invariably the ladies wore veils, not the transparent yasmak popular among Cape Town's Malay maidens, but a wide, thickly starched linen covering that stood out several inches around their shapeless persons and touched the ground about their feet. Except for a funny adventure, about which I will talk later, I never saw anything of Meccan femininity save piercing brown eyes at the "upper portholes."

An incredible variety of nations appeared on the streets. Not only did one meet Arabs, Gurkhas, Afghans, Persians, Turks and other races usually associated with Islam but there were many African blacks, South Sea Islanders, Chinese and even a few Japanese. Clothes were piebald to a degree that made the theatre painter in me wonder what my old chief, Sir Augustus Harris, of Drury Lane, would have thought about them. Yet



A PILGRIM HOUSE, AT MECCA
The front of the house of Sherrefah Zain Wallie, where Hedley Churchward stayed during his visit to Mecca.

all the residents could understand what the pilgrims said, for a kind of *lingua franca* of excessively bad Arabic is in use between the populace and the visitors.

Having ridden about a quarter of an hour the Wakeel, who seemed to be very much at home, pointed out a particularly big house of seven storeys which he said was the property of the Shereefah Zain Wallie.

"That's where you will live," he remarked.

A man came out of the doorway and said the Shereefah already knew I was in the town and had ordered him to guide me. "How did she hear?" I inquired while we walked through the fretted entrance.

"The Koran merchant sent her the message," answered the Arab.

We now entered a square, flagged courtyard surrounded by seven tiers of galleries. Most of these were closed off by Mushrabiehs, lace-like screens of twisted wood which enable women to see men but prevent the latter, while standing below, from discovering a single female face. Beside a fountain, pleasantly shaded by the tall façades facing the quadrangle, I waited for a moment until the Wakeel approached and saluted in his official capacity as the male head of the household. He led me over marble steps into a loftily roofed reception room, where particularly broad and well-upholstered divans surrounded the walls, and it was necessary to ascend a ledge of white stone in order to take one's seat. Costly cushions and carpets from Adrianople, Samarkand, Shiraz and other famous towns gave the floor a very deep, luxurious colouring.

Here my two suit-cases were lying. A pungent smell reminded me that one of them contained in a slightly decomposed state a dainty very scarce in Mecca—a real Dutch cheese. As no pasturage exists here cows are rare, hence also milk and all its products. Moslem friends at Cape Town counselled me to bring along a nice Gouda as a present for my hostess, and I had carried it nearly ten thousand miles since the day I bought it in a South African provision shop.

I unlocked the luggage and pulled out the tin within which rested the cheese.

"This, Wakeel," I said, "is for the Shereefah."

"What is it, Haji?"

"A cheese."

"A cheese. Inshallah! I hope she will give me some. When you are among the Kafirs again you must also send me one."

Lusciously gulping the ripe flavour that rose from the box he bore it away.

After nearly thirty-six hours' riding I had become pretty sticky and grimy. As a preliminary to an elaborate bath several black Sudanese slaves whose heads were covered with "'ayrick 'eads of 'air" entered, salaamed and placed a brass basin and an ewer at my side. Then they pushed back my ekram and washed my feet in the way the Bible often describes. My hands received their soapy attentions; in case I should feel faint, a repast consisting of stuffed turkey, stuffed chicken and crystallized nuts was carried in on beautiful dishes. Everything had been very well cooked; the meat fell

from the bones and tasted as tender as butter. Generally speaking Arabic cooking verges on richness.

"Surely this is not the treatment every pilgrim receives," I asked the Wakeel who, beaming genially, came to find whether I was having my fill.

"Certainly not," answered the major-domo, "but you are a guest of a kind we have never yet welcomed." He added that by the Shereefah's orders I would occupy the best lodgings in the great house, and I fully agreed with him that my surroundings looked palatial.

Having finished my meal, and feeling refreshed by another thorough bath, I meandered along several dark, stone-floored passages which passed dozens of rooms. The size of the building astounded me. Most apartments were empty owing to the absence of pilgrims, but here and there a few stray Hajis sat beside candles reading in Korans or squatting against their bedding on the floor, placidly puffing at amber-tubed pipes. Since Mahomet forbade men to use the bones of animals for their own purposes, the world's output of the beautiful yellow Baltic jewel has been principally bought by the East. The sight of the pious smokers reminded me that I myself would like a cigarette, so I went out into the evening and squatted amid the courtyard. Overhead I again watched Halley's Comet, bigger and more wonderful than ever against the roof-line of the Guest House. Some men were sitting there and talking about it. One of them introduced himself as the Shereefah's Chief Matof. He was a beardless and very dark fellow

named Mohomed Salie and we soon started chatting. He told me that he also came from Beyond the Sea, having been born as the son of a prince, away among the East Indies where the Dutch people ruled.

"When I was a boy," he continued, "an uncle brought me here, and now it is my duty to show the pilgrims what must be done at the Kaaba."

Our talk drifted, and presently we looked at the comet. "These people," said the Matof pointing at his companions, "think you are a lucky man to have come with such a star."

I modestly suggested that it was only a coincidence, because men could calculate when comets become due. At this the guide became quite angry.

"It is," he declared, "Shul Minul Allah (a Work from God), and you must not say that people know when it is coming." Hereupon I held my tongue on the subject and we talked about indifferent things, such as the price of dates and the best breeds of horses. Evidently my companions did not think me very inspiring at that moment because they presently went away. I sat in silence smoking my cigarette when a low voice rang out from above calling: "Embarek!" It belonged to a woman but I took no notice, because my name is "Mobarek." The difference between the two versions is like that between Jack and John. The word was repeated, and then I knew the caller meant me. Nevertheless, I refrained from looking up since, in addressing a female, even though she is invisible, this counts as bad manners,

"Welcome to my house," continued the voice through the grille, and I forthwith guessed it must be the Shereefah herself.

"This is a great compliment," said the Matof to whom I related the matter afterwards. "She has never been known to do that before."

I replied to the lady that I felt proud to live in her house, whereat she answered that she was proud of me, a remark she later repeated to Mahomed Salic.

"The Kafirs make good cheese," declared the lady; "they must have many cows." Our conversation did not last very long as I told her that I was extremely tired.

"Go," the Shereefah suggested, "and have another bath. I will tell Almas and Hadjar to prepare one for you."

A pair of hulking negro youths arrived some minutes afterwards and said that they would lead me to my room. It lay up seven flights of stairs on the top floor and as I passed landing after landing (shuttered where the women lived), I mournfully thought how desirable the introduction of hydraulic or electric lifts would be in Mecca.

Almas and Hadjar were the two slaves who had been especially ordered into my service, and while I stayed in the town they did nothing else but attend to my wishes. At the moment their assiduity had brought into existence a most comfortable square-shaped tub-full of water in a white stone bathroom fitted with a shower. Since I had nothing but my ekram to take off

the preparations did not take very long and when I had removed all the desert grime I went to bed on the flat roof.

Like most houses in the city, that of the Shereefah Zain Wallie was fenced with a parapet of perforated bricks about five feet high. This enabled the inhabitants to look out, but prevented folk on the streets below from peering in. A kind of cane frame was available for me, very suitable for the clammy night. The Matof approached bearing his own bedding under his arm and helped me to erect a mosquito-net I had borrowed at Jeddah. Slaves tucked it in around me, muttering many remarks about the strange habits of the Englishman.

Mahomed Salie slept at my side. Before dozing I listened to all kinds of curious noises that rose out of the nocturnal city. Once a sharp wailing screech resounded over the eaves and I asked the Matof "What is that?"

"Nothing, nothing," answered the latter, "a snake has caught a bird." The unpleasant reptiles swarm throughout the town, and I was disconcerted to find how indifferent the people are to them. In kitchens, on shop counters, along the steps of religious buildings, I often found hideous adders, and my instinct as a South African each time tempted me to kill them. A great number of the brutes are even cobras—speckled, night-marish monsters, as poisonous as anything in Nature. Yet very rarely does anybody ever receive a bite. A great number of mosquitoes were friskily buzzing, but with my net I no longer feared their stings.

Very few human voices sounded across the town. Here and there one might sometimes distinguish a loud cry or a prayer at a dinner party. Laughter and music of any kind were completely absent.

About twenty-seven years ago an Indian carried a phonograph (Edison type) to Mecca with the object, I fancy, of earning some money to pay for his pilgrimage. The early instruments then in use were very small and it was easy for him to bring it to the Holy Town among his luggage. He was quartered in a house near the Bazaar and when the little apparatus started to grind out its few tunes, a great mob of Arabs assembled in the street without.

"Evil spirits are in that house," they called.

This commotion was very soon reported to the Wali, the head of the Turkish military forces, and the official forthwith despatched soldiers to arrest all the people of the caravanserai.

"What magic have you been practising?" he demanded angrily after they appeared in the Presence. The phonograph was placed on the sunny ground in front of the Judge's bench, and as a preliminary the Wali ordered it to be confiscated. In view of the unprecedented nature of the complaint he then sent word to the Shereef of Mecca, the political ruler of the whole country around. The latter asked that the machine should be brought to him and the whole story related. When the frightened Indian had made obeisance in the Throne Yard, the Shereef called for a demonstration of his phonograph. Now the pilgrim only possessed a few

records, and one of them was the voice of an Arabic "Molai" chanter, a professional reciter of religious poems. After one or two common musical pieces had perplexed the ears of the Moslems this disk was put on. Sounds of the sacred music disturbed the ruler greatly.

"It is against the rules of a Mecca pilgrimage," he thundered, and gave the Indian an extremely severe lecture. Following the infliction of a stiff fine on the unfortunate visitor, an eager Bedouin fetched a hammer and in the presence of the Sherief and his servants the talking-machine was utterly smashed to pieces. The same thing happened to the records except the one in Arabic which the potentate considered a sacred object. It remained carefully stored in his palace until the latter was burnt down some years later.

A very sweet, high-pitched and unfamiliar bugle call, quite different from those used in the British Army, awoke me with the daylight. The tune for me had rather a childish and effeminate sound compared with the lively reveilles the Tommies hear at Aldershot. Through the mosquito net I could see the forts becoming populous in the dawn and soldiers swiftly lined up on the ramparts of the seven or eight hills. I put on the ekram and stood ready for the day's religious duties. Almas and Hadjar approached and wished me a Good Morning. They washed me, as babies are washed in other countries, and I started to ask them something about their histories. Both of them had been captured as children by slave traders in the Southern Sudan and they were completely happy at being in bondage. Liberty, as far as they

could make out, seemed to involve work, a thing they desired to keep at a minimum. None among the dozens of slaves in the Matof's house had more than one particular duty, and this was by no means heavy. Almas (the name by the way means "A Diamond") did nothing but bring me my bath water, Hadjar (which signified "A Stone") served at meals, a third negro made a couple of beds and then lay down to doze in the sun.

Mecca possesses no regular slave-market, but since the Koran does not forbid the practice (though it encourages manumission) a great number are sold out of hand. To many owners I tried to explain European objections against the idea, but all of them thought it a perfectly natural and harmless institution. Of course I do not for a moment defend slavery, yet I must say that I never saw any bondservant ill-treated in Arabia. Most of them had an easy life.

About two-thirds of the whole resident population is in bondage. Nearly all the men are Sudanese, Somali, and other Africans, pitch black giants, very fat, beardless and jovial. They hardly ever marry. Of the women, I did not see any at all except under veils, but I was told that quite a number of Circassians, Syrians, and other white girls lived behind some harem shutters.

While eating a cool breakfast of melons in the courtyard, where I fancied I could again sense the Shereefah staring through the grille, I learnt from the Wakeel that a Meccan citizen wanted to speak to me. Marvelling who this might be, I bade my slave bring him along at once. A man, very old by Arabian standards, between

sixty and seventy years, with a white beard and plentiful wrinkles, walked across the yard and respectfully saluted. How pleased I felt when he started first in Dutch and then in broken English: "I am Abdul Mallik, from Cape Town."

"From Cape Town?" I cried. "Are you also a pilgrim?"

He shook his grizzled head and said: "I live here for good." He was not related to the famous Hafiz whom I mentioned before, but he knew a great deal about the Magic Ring. Abdul wished me to visit him at his house, and I promised to do this very soon. We talked quite a lot about South Africa. My friend possessed six or seven houses in Cape Town and, he casually mentioned, a wife and several children.

"Why do you not live with them?" I queried.

"Because," he said, "I have another wife and some more children here."

CHAPTER IX

AT THE KAABA

WHEN Abdul Mallik had gone the Matof advised me not to delay my first visit to the Kaaba. I agreed. I walked inside to take one of the innumerable baths which I henceforth underwent daily. In approaching the tub and throughout my subsequent doings I kept a very cautious look-out for living things, since the final progress of the Haj necessitates the avoidance of every kind of killing, even of the most obscure creatures such as flies, fleas, beetles or ants. Should any man find himself being bitten by vermin, he must either carefully lift it off on to the ground, or, where this is somewhat difficult, as in the case of a flea, he may request a friend to catch it.

My prayer carpet lay spread on the roof, and here I first knelt to make the preliminary rakahts or prostrations before the Almighty in the way I had always done at the Mosque since my conversion. The Matof, who worshipped by my side, then told me to pronounce after him a great number of additional phrases which constitute the specifically "pilgrim" part of the ceremony. In all that followed I copied exactly what Mahomed Salie did. Wherever he walked, I followed, whenever

he bowed, I did the same, the phrases that he spoke were uttered in the same tone by Hedley Churchward.

Sometimes the Matof looked round and showed his satisfaction at my obedience. Having carefully seen that my ekram had not the smallest suspicion of a knot, he led me out of the house and through the glary, daylight highways of Mecca. My guide was not naked but in ordinary robes and the peculiar turban, a head-gear unlike any other. It is woven out of straw, worked with silk, resembling a crown more than anything else. Pious Malays in Cape Town like to put these on in their homes, but an unwritten rule says that no man save a Haji should wear the Meccan turban. The same restriction applies to the tassel on the fez, which also ought only to be used by those who accomplish the pilgrimage. South African Moslems, however, are to-day very lax about this custom. In contrast to the slippers protecting my feet from the hot stones Mahomed Salie wore Medass, or Meccan sandals, ornamented in gold. Over the Matof's shoulder hung the same prayer mat which the proprietor of the Shah Jehan Palace Hotel at Bombay gave me as a farewell token.

This time the bazaars were much busier than on the afternoon when I had arrived, and I myself now noticed what an alarming number of poisonous reptiles infested the town. Scores of the noisome creatures slid among the traffic, making me feel nervous.

The streets hung full of very many smells, some particularly strong and others of comparative feeble-

ness, but never completely absent. They are due to the existence of innumerable cesspools which are emptied out at dead of night on a definite date each year. Fortunately I missed the event; when it happened, the inhabitants told me, they were scarcely able to breathe.

The increasing frequency with which my friend gave ritual instructions soon kept my attention from anything except the Haram. We approached it after a quarter of an hour spent in dodging camels and impetuous Oriental salesmen.

Just as I saw, across the end of a street, the battlements which surround the Sacred Place, a shabbily gowned stranger called to the Matof and asked whether he might copy our ceremonious gestures. Mahomed Salie nodded consent, whereupon the other man walked behind us throughout the ritual, near enough to follow everything the guide showed me. He was a poor pilgrim, and the Matof said it was a special act of merit to let him join us. All the time I passed that day at the Haram, I saw the man, and when the Haj had ended, he thanked both Mahomed Salie and me most heartily for the favour.

Our road twisted, and I discovered more of the big wall.

"That," spoke the Matof, "is the Bab-el-Ibrahim" (The Gate of Abraham). Its majestic, beautifully-carved, high-arched Moorish doorway resembled a castle entrance. Behind I could notice a lofty minaret, probably a hundred feet high.

Dodging numerous very snappy, ill-disposed curs, we neared this entrance to the Haram. Like the dogs of Constantinople, the brutes remain in defined quarters of the town and these they never leave. Tradition tells the Meccans that they can actually smell an infidel, and that two Englishmen who once reached the city were suspected owing to the excessive barking of the dogs. The luckless visitors were searched, recognised, and forthwith made slaves, after being compulsorily converted to Mohammedanism. They never again left the town, but ended their lives as the most menial type of servants.

When the animals showed me what scant amiability they had I felt quite gratified, and I suspect their attitude convinced many doubters that I was a genuine pilgrim.

Notwithstanding the dogs' religious assiduity they are not admitted into the Holy Enclosure. A parapet, about two feet high, stretches across the road in order to keep them out, and subsequently I found all the sever doorways leading towards the Kaaba possessed a like protection. Another consequence, of course, is that no vehicle can enter.

The Matof and I climbed over this little rampart and walked upon a white marble pavement which stretched between it and the big gate looming above us. A kind of stone ledge surrounds the little area thus bounded and on it numerous people were pulling off or putting on their shoes. Nowhere must the rule about carrying dirt from the street into a sacred place be more carefully



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obeyed than in the Haram. The Sheikh of the Doorway, an old Arab whose duty it is to take care of the worshippers' shoes, commanded several younger men to assist us. They took my slippers and Mahomed Salie's sandals, but never gave any ticket. At every gateway there is accommodation for several thousand pairs, yet no difficulty arises in identifying them despite the absence of tally slips.

While removing my footgear I noticed some light-skinned, well-groomed men who tugged most curious contraptions from the bottom of their shoes. By a kind of snap-lock they removed the complete sole leaving the rest of the foot protected, as though they were only wearing spats.

These soles the sheikh filed away as he did the sandals of more usual worshippers. I asked the Matof what the practice meant.

"The men yonder are rich Turks," came his explanation; "they have those special shoes made at Constantinople. If one presses a spring on the heel the sole comes off and thus the rule about going barefoot is conveniently obeyed. The people are strange in many ways," continued Mahomed Salie. "They will spend more money on such a thing than you or I would spend on a robe, and they even carry their own knife, fork and spoon in a leather case when they go to dine."

Along those marble ledges lay an unbelievably curious assortment of footwear. Persian, Chinese, Japanese, Indian and other outlandish specimens of cobbling

twinkled in numberless colours—blue, purple, scarlet, yellow, orange, green, gold, silver, etc. Some had curly points, others possessed inlaid heels, a different variety consisted of nothing but a wooden plank into which had been lodged a round knob. The whole fantastic assortment brought back to me the orders I got from the late Sir Augustus Harris, when the latter prepared the *Forty Thieves* as a Drury Lane Pantomime. One of the great scenes was in the Cobbler's Shop and I remember Sir Augustus telling us in the paint-room to create a collection of shoes of a kind no one ever saw before. "I wonder how the Old Man would have liked this lot," I now thought to myself.

Pulling out my purse the Matof handed a small copper coin as a tip to the sheikh. In matters of currency the Meccans show the utmost broadmindedness. Practically every coinage in the world circulates here, not even excluding that of the United States. Indian annas and rupees, Chinese trade dollars, curious holed pieces from the Persian Empire, Maria Theresa dollars out of Abyssinia, Russian roubles and kopecks, Greek drachmæ, Dutch florins from Batavia, Turkish piastres, Rumanian lei, Spanish pesetas (issued in Morocco) and countless other kinds of money are willingly accepted by Meccan tradesmen.

We walked through the great vault that cuts through Bab-el-Ibrahim, its ceiling being fully fifty feet above us. Beyond the entrance are pillared cloisters lined with pulpits whence Mullahs of different sects, Shiah and Shafi, lecture to their placidly squatting disciples in sonorous

sing-song tones. For a little while I looked at the diminishing vista of Koran scholars, rather like those at Azhar, but studying in much more magnificent surroundings. Between the columns handsome, white Oriental lamps dangled from chains. They are used during the feast of Beiram, and as there is a four or five fold row of them extending in the aggregate for some miles, I think that they must number several hundred thousand. On ordinary nights only a few are put on, during Ramadan, however, the lamplighters do not forget a single one, and the panorama of flickering flames leaves Piccadilly or Broadway looking shabby.

These cloisters are very broad, probably one hundred feet, but the space is broken by several lines of carved columns which hold the arched roof. The pillars are all different. Generations of Shahs, Sultans, Caliphs, and Amirs have dowered these gorgeous marble structures upon the famous gallery which runs round an immense, rectangular, pink and cream paved plain shining with outrageous brightness behind the shadows of the colonnades. So far does this quadrangle stretch that the cloisters grow minute in the distance. One, perhaps two, hundred thousand folk can pray simultaneously within the enclosure, the Haram proper, in whose centre I saw an isolated, block-shaped, pitch-dark mass, about thirty feet high and forty feet long. That was the Kaaba!

The Matof spread out my prayer mat so that it just faced the temple.

"Make a prayer of two rakahts," commanded Mahomed Salie. I knew what to do and twice went down on my forehead in the way prescribed by the Koran, looking towards the black cube with the gold band round it stop, the very centre of Islam, which was now only three hundred yards off.

Beneath the Holy Carpet, one of those whose departure from Egypt I had witnessed long ago, I could see a wall of the little temple into which is mortared the stone that fell from Heaven in Adam's lifetime. Around this building stand various structures resembling kiosks, and pulpits like staircases on whose steps the imams preach during prayer hours.

From Bab-el-Ibrahim and all the other entrances broad gravel paths lead between the pink pavement straight towards the Kaaba. The little warm pebbles felt uncomfortable against my bare feet and the Matof pointed out that it was usual, while the sun remained comparatively cool, to walk upon the flagstones.

Saving the Kaaba I did not know the significance of any of these buildings, but I was soon to learn. Numbers of people looked at me including several veiled women, who by the way, are permitted to pray at the Haram as freely as any male. Apart from Mahomed Salie, nobody spoke, because it is sinful to interrupt a pilgrim during his Haj ceremony. On little mats scattered here and there, folk were praying. Glare from the pink and white slabs, smooth as glass under my naked toes, made my eyes water, and I soon found it a strain



A unique view of the Kaaba temple at close quarters. The stone which, tradition says, fell from heaven in Adam's lifetime, is set in a silver setting in the left corner where the

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to follow what the Matof was doing. The ground looked very clean, immense care being taken to wash the place. Meccans believe that notwithstanding the movable date of the Pilgrim Season (which varies with the time of Ramadan) a great downpour of rain immediately follows it and washes the Haram clean again. When such rare showers do not fall a number of Arabs occupy themselves in removing every speck of filth throughout the many acres within the enclosure. Birds are chased away lest they besmire the buildings, and it certainly seems strange that one hardly ever sees any settle there.

We walked straight to the Kaaba, chanting prayers, and strode slowly round the tall structure. Close at hand I saw that the Holy Carpet is embroidered all over with Koran inscriptions. Not only does the golden strip glitter with texts but the entire fabric of the black woollen covering contains Arabic praises of Allah and Mahomet. Immediately after the annual replacement of this wrapper the old one is cut into thousands of little pieces that are sold to pilgrims. Later I bought a few square inches of the black cloth on which can be distinguished some fragments of the lettering. This lies among my souvenirs even now.

Coming close towards the Kaaba I saw that one corner of the carpet was held back by a silver wire and underneath, against a mortared wall, I beheld a perfectly black oval stone set in silver. A scrollwork frame of the same metal surrounded the relic. The Matof went up and kissed it, saying a prayer as he did so. I followed, also putting my lips to the meteorite (that is obviously

A unique view of the Kaaba temple at close quarters. The stone which, tradition says, fell from heaven in Adam's lifetime, is set in a silver setting in the left corner where the embroidered Holy Carpet is opened.

its origin). Some say the Kaaba stone is split into several pieces which have been mounted. I myself never distinguished any cracks. The surface looks quite smooth, but possesses a stickiness that results from the contract of untold millions of lips. A whitish vein runs across it.

For over thirteen hundred years the majority of Mahomedans have travelled across the ocean to make reverence thereto, and according to scientists the Arabs worshipped here long before Islam existed. The Prophet's own family, the Koreits, had already for centuries been the hereditary guardians of the Kaaba, and one's mind begins to reel on trying to calculate how many people have touched it since then.

Leaving the stone, I marched behind the Matof, and saw at the eastern end, an entrance to the temple underneath the carpet. Ten or twelve feet from the ground two pear-shaped panels of gorgeous Persian design, moulded in solid silver and full of elaborate arabesques, hung as doors. I found with surprise that no steps led up. Later a kind of movable staircase on wheels was pointed out to me, and Salie explained that whenever the religious officials wish to enter the building, this is wheeled up to the entrance. Just below the doors the pavement has been cut in a curious way so as to form several stone steps leading a few feet down. It was done to allow pilgrims desirous of acquiring the Gift of Tongues to kiss the Kaaba's foundation stone. A quaint legend says that he who touches the base of the Sacred Building with his lips will straightway attain the purest Arabic

pronunciation. Despite numerous invitations I nevertheless did not try this means of enlarging my linguistic gifts.

The Matof still kept slowly chanting and still I repeated his words. Now we had made the circuit of the Temple and once again the stone had to be kissed. Seven times did I walk round the relic, and seven times did I put my mouth to it. The whole ceremony lasted about three quarters of an hour.

Relaxing a little bit after the strain, the guide declared that we must now run the way which Hagar took when the Almighty caused a spring to flow and thereby saved her son Ishmael from death by thirst. Mecca stands in the valley where my co-religionists believe this event to have happened, and the actual fountain, called "Zamzam," bubbles from the desert soil in a little building adjoining the Kaaba.

Hagar, when she found the well, hurried to the place where her child, the founder of the Arabic race, had fallen to die, and carried him towards the water. Every pilgrim must run along the path which the noble woman covered on that occasion. Mahomed Salie began a trotting stride from the Kaaba, across the Haram, down several curving streets of the town and up steep steps, singing prayers all the time. I panted after him in the heat, and presently reached a kind of platform possessing ruined walls as of an ancient temple. During Hagar's time no steps existed here, only the steep, scorched rocks of the wilderness. To-day houses surround the crumbling structure. Photographs have never yet

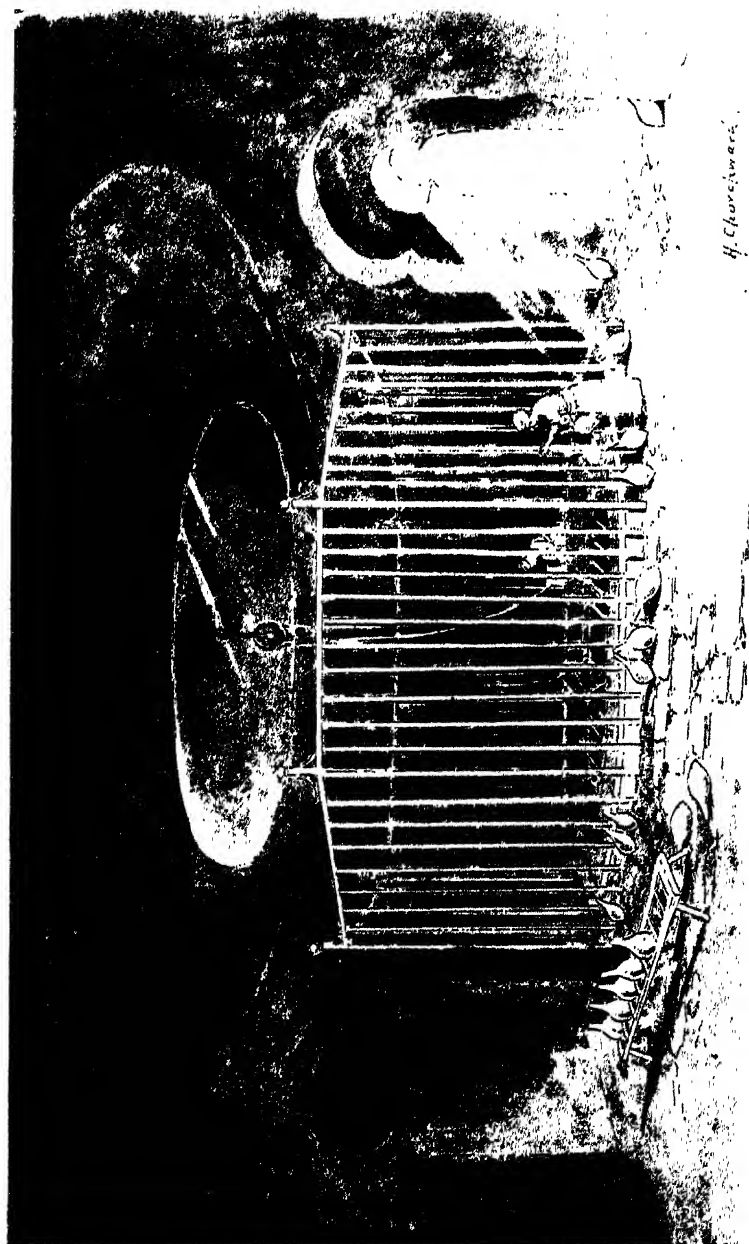
been taken of this place, which is just as holy as the Kaaba itself, and I regret to admit that I failed to obtain a picture. We turned and rushed down the stairs again towards another Haram gateway. Reaching this, we swung back, climbed up and repeated the entire run no fewer than seven times.

I then felt so tired that my knees shook and I leant gasping against the broken masonry above the stone heap.

Hereafter we hastened inside the enclosure to the well of Zamzam, thereby symbolising Hagar's appeal to God and her ultimate discovery of water.

Two or three steps led downwards into a small domed Moorish building whose twilit interior lay half underground. Amid the stone-built hall was the well, surrounded by a parapet. Two Arabs constantly hauled buckets from the deep and filled the contents into little goblets which they handed to some belated Hajis outside a tall railing. Beyond the bars nobody was allowed to walk. There must have been about forty or fifty fellows in ekrams, led by a rival Matof, and great was the chatter about the fact that I, a single pilgrim, possessed one of these officials to myself. Numbers of veiled women stood among the drinkers, but every man took care not to touch their clothes or to address a word of any kind to them.

Without asking my desire, an attendant seized a bottle which had just been filled from the well and poured water from it into a pair of earthenware flasks. The latter looked great curiosities, being stoppered at



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THE WELL OF HAGAR

This shows the interior of the Zamzam building where the well which saved the lives of Hagar and Ishmael still bubbles for the benefit of Believers. The grating prevents the drawers from being hampered by crowds. Note the curious Arabic bottles which must be kept in a rack as they have no smooth base.

the top and coming to a point at the base like an old-fashioned cone of sugar. This is the ancient Arab style of bottle, and each one must stand on a rack just as an egg does in the pantry of an European housewife. In various parts of the Haram I saw several such structures from which anybody might take Zamzam water gratis. The liquid, though perfectly clear, tasted like milk, being evidently medicated in some natural way. It is not, however, effervescent. Only on the day when Hagar found the well does the water level rise spontaneously from the deep—so goes the tale.

After the exercise I had undergone outside I swallowed the drink most gratefully and asked for more, which seemed unusual. The Matof tipped the men from my purse whereupon I got another mug. While I drank the water Mahomed Salie told me that the word Zamzam meant "Bubbling," that a special dignitary, called the Sheikh of Zamzam, had supreme custody over it, and that there was a little room nearby where one could be bathed in the water. I immediately insisted on being taken there. Behind a screen I found several men who were bucketing each other with the liquid, trying, at the same time, to swallow as much of it as possible.

Among most pilgrims exists the belief that one cannot be injured by taking too much of the water. One man gulped gallons and gallons of it, till his stomach swelled and he finally got an attack of gripes, that sent him rolling on the floor. The complaint for which the Haji thought this treatment a cure was internal, and

while the patient lay on the marble surface he moaned that he had not swallowed enough. Serious sickness, however, counts as a bar to those who want to visit Mecca. Indeed, the absence of those hideous diseased figures which throng other Oriental towns is a main attraction of the place. Anybody with a skin complaint, leprosy, beriberi, etc., would be prevented by the Koran from commencing the Haj.

In the bathroom not much notice was taken of me. Several commented on the whiteness of my body, but this is not unusual, since many Turks possess light skins. The Matof said that the ceremonies were not yet finished: I had to be shaved. He led me from the Haram towards Hagar's ruins again, near which spot lived a ritual barber. This man, who received me in a divaned room on the first floor of his house, was not an ordinary hairdresser, but an ecclesiastical worker. First we spread out our carpets and spoke our prayers. Then I sat down on some pillows and he fetched an array of brass bowls and broad-bladed razors with which he shaved a patch around my scalp, somewhat like the tonsure of a Roman Catholic monk. Finally the barber did what no other barber that I know ever tried, he embraced me and planted a kiss on each cheek. The Matof did the same before the next pilgrim, who had been waiting at the door, took his turn.

All of a sudden Mahomed Salie behaved quite sociably. After the many hours of worship he relaxed, and although his English was very, very small, he

used as much of it as possible while we walked home. The afternoon was late and I had not eaten anything at all since sunrise, yet it was delightful to realize that the purpose of pilgrimage had been carried through. All the household received me like the proverbial conquering hero. Numerous black slaves rushed up and kissed my hand when I entered. In the courtyard dozens of entire strangers were lounging. They rose from their cushions and mobbed me, forming a kind of queue to make their embraces. Four or five other Matofs, also in the employ of the Shereefah Zain Wallie, complimented Mahomed Salie on his distinguished customer (meaning me) and then I was asked to attend a dinner organized in my honour. In a large room a table about eighteen inches high had been laid by the domestics who now started to carry in trays and trays of delicately cooked dishes, particularly of stuffed poultry and fruit. Slaves washed our hands before we started and offered me the platters first. Nearly all the bearded men invited were Syeds. Meccans deem them very snobbish, since none may marry anybody except another descendant of the Prophet; so their presence was a considerable compliment to Hedley Churchward. Looking at the faces around the table, I again realized the ignorance of European artists who draw pictures for Oriental tales. According to the Koran the length of the beard must not be more than the wearer's fist, held against his chin, can clutch. Yet in English, German, French and other Western books one constantly finds sultans, viziers, dervishes, in fact all

Mahomedans with minute growths a foot or more long. Even the illustrations for the gorgeous *Arabian Nights* published by Burton were wrong on this point, and I am surprised that the explorer did not point out the fault.

"Bismillah," said everybody on starting a dish. We talked about matters of religion, and one Imam carefully explained how a Believer might eat pig during a famine. If a Moslem has the choice between a swine and a dog, at such a time, he must take the former. Having finished our supper the slaves brought coffee and cigarettes, with which we moved to the courtyard. Presently I heard a wicket in an upstairs gallery click and then the Shereefah called out a customary formula: "Peace be with you. Welcome Haji Embarek." This was the first time I had ever been legitimately saluted as a Haji.

I answered: "With you be peace, Shereefah."

My Matof now added: "You can take a bath and stop wearing your ekram."

Delighted at having attained this honourable status I went and had a real good tub, whereupon I donned my Bedouin robes which I was not, up till then, permitted to use.

Mograb prayers were due, and a crowd of Arabs accompanied me to the Haram for this act, so very much simpler than the strenuous duties of the earlier day. Only three rakahs had to be performed beside the Kaaba. After admiring the handsome lamps which burn on several poles round the Sacred Stone I started

home with my friends. We stepped over the rampart that keeps out the dogs and were turning towards the quarter where the Shereefah lived when I discovered a man striding from the shadows below an alcove and pulling the Matof's arm. For several minutes they spoke in a swift murmur I was unable to follow. As far as I could distinguish in the gloom the stranger seemed an Indian and presently he uttered one or two Hindustani words. He was a thin man, well dressed in white silk robes, and wore a tasselled tarbush. Light coming from a doorway showed that the stranger must be about thirty years old. The Arabs who were with me asked each other: "What had happened?" They grew silent when they saw Mahomed Salie chattering with increasing earnestness. Suddenly the guide called, "Haji, do you know this man?"

"No," I answered, "I have never seen him before."

Meanwhile, I noticed the Indian talking privately to the other Matof. We went back to the pilgrim house, where I thoughtfully lounged in its courtyard wondering what had happened. I sighted my guide calling for the Wakeel. The latter arrived, heard what the other man whispered, and then ran straight up the staircase that led towards the Shereefah's rooms.

Whatever might have caused the trouble, and there certainly existed a most peculiar, mysterious air throughout the buildings since the home-coming, the Shereefah and her Wakeel must have decided that nothing was wrong.

Once again the Matof approached me and asked: "Are you quite sure that you do not know this Indian?"

He queried so insistently that I finally said: "He may have been on the ship. If so I never spoke to him."

Gradually I sensed the trouble. The Indian reported I was not a real Mahomedan but an infidel spy. Ever since I came, suspicious people whispered such things even in my hearing. To learn, therefore, that the Sherceefah had sent for my former townsman, the Imam Abdul Mallik, of Cape Town, was quite pleasant, since I knew the old fellow possessed good reports of me. Late in the evening I saw the Malay beside the Sherceefah's grating and he must have peeped her, because the next morning everything in the house seemed as sedate as ever. The earliest of the five prayers every Mussulman makes in the course of twenty-four hours took me to the Haram just before sunrise. When I came back and had drunk the jar of Zamzam water which a porter daily delivered at my room, a slave brought a message that some soldiers wanted to see me. Almost before he finished reporting this, a smartly uniformed Osmanli Captain, carrying a drawn sword, strode in followed by six soldiers bearing guns. They saluted and tried to be polite, but I noticed they carefully blocked the door. A scared-looking Wakeel peeped over the burly shoulders of the escort and called to the officer in Turkish. The latter, who obviously knew no English, pointed at me while he answered.

"Haji, you are arrested," exclaimed the Wakeel.

"What for?" I asked.

"The Indian reports you are a spy."

"What nonsense," I said, but I felt rather depressed as I got ready to visit the Courthouse.

Through the crowded town we marched, a small but very noticeable procession. People looked surprised. I could hear many questions about the meaning of the affair, and dozens of citizens ran behind us until the Captain ordered the soldiers to turn round and bawl that they should get away if they did not want to be bastinadoed.

The Wali's or Governor's Court is one of the few public buildings in Mecca, a very plain, rectangularly faced structure with several small windows over its stone gateway. My captors marched me into an outer and then into an inner yard partly roofed at one end so as to shelter the Seat of Justice. Beside the wall I took off my slippers and made my way between numerous loungers towards the upholstered divans which ran round the Court. The audience consisted mostly of soldiers, but during the proceedings more and more civilians filed in. I was taken towards a raised platform where a Turk with a black moustache, red tarbush, military uniform with gold epaulettes, shiny moon-shaped orders and a sword, courteously bowed to me. No witness box or even table existed here. The Wali asked the prisoner to sit down upon some cushions, and having salaamed he addressed the officer who arrested me: "What is this case?"

I did not understand Turkish, so the remaining dialogue was translated by the Matof who stood at my side. Mahomed Salie explained that the Indian accused me of being a Christian, "but," he added, "my friend, the Captain, takes your side." When the latter told the Court about the allegation he added, "I bet my life the Englishman is not a spy."

"Why are you so sure?" the Wali wanted to know.

"Because," argued the officer, "he has Nur-Allah (The Light of God) in his eyes."

With a quill pen the Governor wrote on some strips of parchment and then asked the Matof whether the Shereefah Zain Wallie was ready to guarantee that I would not escape.

"Certainly," answered the guide. Hereupon the legal official ordered that the Indian should be brought. Soldiers walked round the court looking for him, but among all those gaping hundreds, the thin, nervy countenance of the accuser could not be noticed.

"He is at his house," explained the Matof, and Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward was told he might go home till to-morrow. The same patrol which made the arrest marched me along the bazaar again where Salie muttered: "Do not go for walks till this trouble is over."

Suspicion is unpleasant at all times, and I thought the time had now come to settle the difficulty once and for all. During the morning I unpacked some of my

luggage and took out the Cadi's passport. But when a commission which, I found, included a military surgeon, came to examine me in the Faith, I said nothing about the document, contenting myself with answers to their questions. After the strenuous adventure before the learned Imams of Cairo I did not particularly fear the sages who now filled my reception room. Their conundrums were very similar, and my replies satisfied them, especially after I stripped and showed them a silver amulet which my wife's relatives had given to me years ago. It was a little sealed container, holding a Koran verse illuminated on paper. Very respectfully their brown hands touched it.

"This is an Azeema," exclaimed one scholar, and put it away on a bag. Later it was sent back to me.

Next day the bodyguard called and I once again visited the Court. On its flagged pavement squatted even more pilgrims, soldiers and townsmen than attended the first hearing. As I neared the Judge's seat I beheld the Wali waving to me, and before I had time to reach him, he stepped off the divan, kissed my hand and heartily shook it. "Sit next to me," he said.

"This does not look like the treatment of a criminal," I thought to myself. Just then a disturbance took place among those waiting at the gate. Several soldiers were being pushed from behind as an Arab woman jostled her way. That she had a lawsuit was evident from a paper in her hand. She ran up towards the platform and kissed my bare feet crying a complaint about a lodger who would not pay his rent. The good

and thought I was was the Wali, who possessed sufficient influence to meet the situation.

"I have ordered the Indian to come," he whispered.

This appeared the right moment for an explanation. Pushing two fingers below my robe I drew out a cream-coloured document signed by the Cadi of Egypt, and laid it on the carpet. The Turk looked at the seals, then at me, and suddenly salaamed as though I were the Sultan himself. Upon seeing this everybody in the court followed, though they did not know the reason until the Wali said: "As far as I am concerned the matter is over. I wish every pilgrim had such a passport."

Now began a grand search for the Indian. According to Meccan law he was guilty of libelling a fellow-Moslem, an offence with a penalty equivalent to £1,000 in English money. Somebody, I afterwards heard, had told him that my Mahomedan credentials were better than his own, and when the document actually appeared before the Wali the pilgrim remembered an engagement in Afghanistan or Java. He was never caught.

I did not regret this, because Mecca justice is fearfully severe. I am speaking literally when I say that it is possible to leave one's purse in any Bazaar street and find it untouched days later. Shortly before I arrived a pilgrim, out of pure curiosity, had cut a hole in a sack that was being loaded on to a camel. A little rice ran out before the damage was noticed. Quite naively the stranger admitted he had done it. Com-

plainants dragged him before the Shereef of Mecca himself. Frowningly the latter heard the story.

"Did you cut the sack?" he asked.

"I did," answered the man.

"Did you close up the hole again?" came a further question.

"No, I did not."

Forthwith the Shereef ordered that the hand which had caused grain to be wasted should be hacked off.

A Cape Town Malay friend of mine, who casually picked up a parcel which had been dropped in the roadway, placed it on the low parapet ledge of a house. He only walked a few steps before he found himself the centre of a disturbance. All the merchants and householders round about ran after the pilgrim and yelled that he should put back the package where he found it.

As I left the court the Wali said to me: "I think that the Shereef will want to see you in order to set his own doubts at rest."

"Good," I answered, "when should I go to his Palace?"

"He is at Taif just now," replied the Governor, "but we have a telegraph line running there and I will find out."

Somebody went to the Post Office and very soon I heard that the ruler would be back within a few days.

Outside the Government buildings well-wishers thronged around, each one anxious to embrace me. The

experience of several dozen successive hugs is gratifying but strenuous. At the house appeared Abdul Mallik, who smiled at me and whispered: "Haji, do not draw pictures or take photographs or go on the hills where the forests are."

In view of what had just happened I promised. Even this failed to satisfy the nervous fellow, who wanted me to handle no firearms, an undertaking I willingly gave, as I never did so under any circumstances.

The old man and his son frequently came for gossip after meals, and during one of our rambling little talks he asked me to visit his house. It lay, Abdul told me, on the town's outskirts, and I gladly joined the little outing he arranged. Having put on my best robe out of politeness to my host, I walked with Abdul junior, a lively young fellow of sixteen years, through an unfamiliar part of Mecca, which nevertheless much resembled the area I already knew.

Beggars are very numerous in the streets, but they bear no likeness to the alms-seekers who infest the thoroughfares of other Oriental towns. Nearly all of the men cry: "Allah Akreem" (God help me), which indicates that they are poor pilgrims obliged to obtain money for their home trip from pious Meccans. These appeals never fail, and the Hajis are most careful to depart as soon as they collect the needful funds, because fraudulent cadgers meet with draconic treatment.

Abdul Mallik's house was an unpretentious white place built on the summit of a hillock which one could see beyond the city walls. We made our way through

the gate that leads towards the caravan trail to Taif, and climbing slowly along the stony slope reached the flat-roofed premises at whose door the owner most elaborately bade me welcome. We squatted in a plain room and immediately ate a very delightful cold melon of the kind known in South Africa as Spanspeck, or "Spanish Bacon." After the walk this was the most satisfying refreshment thinkable, and young Abdul, judging by his large bites, evidently thought the same. Suddenly, however, the youngster put down his fruit and held a large woven shawl in front of my startled face.

"You must excuse my son," explained Mallik, "for holding up that cloth. My female slave is passing."

Jokingly I asked whether she was so extremely beautiful as to disturb men's hearts. On Mallik's hairy lips there hung a smile: "She is the ugliest woman in Mecca," he said, "but custom demands it."

"I did not know you were rich enough to own a slave," I observed. At this he told me his story.

"She is not my property," he said, "but my wife's. This wife is the widow of a Mecca Arab. When, years ago, I arrived here as a pilgrim, I stayed on some time and presently thought I ought to get married. In the Bazaars I mentioned it to several shopkeepers and a man came, saying: 'It is the Desire of Allah that you should be my son-in-law.'

"What is your daughter's dowry?" I asked. We arranged that it should be £20 and the Mecca man said he would prepare for the wedding. I was to meet him

at a certain house on the east side of the town where the ceremony would take place.

"Of course I dressed myself in silk after having bathed carefully. At the place appointed some strangers sat in the courtyard and told me that my bride was a widow with two sons.

"An Imam, a very polite and learned man, walked in and took me towards a divan beside which he chanted the marriage service. Two young Arabs who, I now guessed, were my two sons, ran up and kissed my hand. They introduced themselves and said their names were Hussein Talib and Abdul Talib.

"I have lived through many curious things, Haji, but that marriage frightened me. Why was I not content with my other wife and family in Cape Town? Where would this all end? The two boys went away again and then a very black woman, wearing a yasmak, came into the room and also kissed my hand. In spite of the veil I could see she was outrageously ugly, with a flat forehead and a thick nose. I felt very sorry that I had ever arranged for a wedding. If that was my wife I had made a very poor bargain. Despairingly I ate the feast and listened to the usual merrymaking. In the evening my father-in-law led me to the bride's room where I was to see her without her veil. My heart felt like a piece of lead, and as I walked through the door I said to myself: 'Abdul, you have done something very foolish.' To my surprise the negress was not sitting there. Another Arab woman, fairly young and quite handsome, smiled at me and said she was my wife.

You can fancy, Mobarek, that I felt very happy, especially when she pointed with her finger into the yard and showed me camels, goats and cattle as her dowry." Abdul Mallik lit his pipe and smirked contentedly.

"I suppose," I said, "that the old lady who walked past just now was the slave you mistook for your bride?"

The Malay nodded. "I have now another son and daughter in addition to the two boys I got at my wedding."

We talked a lot about Cape Town, and in view of his ownership of six houses he wanted to know how the property market stood there.

"Is it not possible to get back to Africa?" he asked me. "Nowadays I make my living as a Matof, but to live for ever in Mecca is wearisome and I would like to go home again."

In consequence of this plea I made some inquiries of friends in the town, but found the plan was impossible because Abdul's new wife had the right to detain him.

We talked for a time until another veiled figure came into our room. The master of the household said: "This is the woman I married."

I salaamed to her and Mrs. Mallik declared that she had often seen me at the Haram where nobody spoke his prayers more correctly than I did.

"You are the talk of Mecca," observed Abdul in a serious way. "Don't be frightened but never go alone among Arabs you do not know. Many will not believe that an Englishman can possibly be a Moslem."

One son led me through the labyrinthine streets back

to my quarters, where I arrived in time for midday prayers. The prescribed seasons are: Before breakfast, after breakfast, about noon, about four o'clock, just before sunset and just after sunset (Mograb). My religion is especially careful to forbid any ceremonies which might lead outsiders to think we worship the Sun. Hence one may not pray while it rises or sets; there must be full daylight or complete night.

The Kaaba is not the only Holy Place in Mecca. I was obliged to visit the graveyard where the Prophet's family lies buried. This group of white, domed buildings stands below a Turkish fort outside the town, and almost every direct relation of Mahomet rests within one or other of the little temples. From a distance the cluster of tombs looks like a small village. Among the surrounding boulders a great number of people had spread their carpets for prayers. I entered several of the vaulted halls and at each grave said a rakaht. Having kissed the smooth slabs I crossed in the quivering sunshine to the next tomb and in company with several townsmen repeated my obeisances there. . . . On this expedition as usual, the Matof came with me.

Since I visited Mecca I have learnt from other Hajis that the Zeara has been fenced in by the present Shereef who discourages any pilgrimages except to the Kaaba. He also caused the demolition of another place I saw while it still existed, the house where Mahomet was born.

Near the Bazaar stood this shabby, ancient structure which had sunk into the earth in such an extraordinary



THE APPROACH TO MAHOMET'S BIRTHPLACE
 In order to reach the actual room where the prophet's cradle stood, the pilgrims have to be descended.

way that pilgrims descended cellar steps to reach it. Almost total darkness hung round me when I left the door, and I kept close to the Matof lest I should get lost. As we neared the bottom a very strong, sweet scent rose from the shadowy deep. I found myself in a gloomy, underground room lit by dim skylights. A slab of stone showed where the Prophet's cradle stood. On this spot the richest men in Islam had for centuries delighted to pour the costliest perfumes, and if any man put his hand thereon the smell, despite all washing, lingered for a month.

Worshippers kept constantly arriving, and I could not stay very long lest others lost their turn. But I now feel glad that I did not omit the visit.

To worship regularly at the Haram remained my chief duty. Barefoot walking on the hot flagstones in the enclosure gave me the greatest worry, because, unlike the Arabs, I was accustomed to shoes. On one occasion, while I made the seventh circuit of the Kaaba during which one may not turn one's back on it, but must walk backwards, I suddenly felt dizzy—the domed roofs of the distant cloisters flickered, the black cubical temple stood askew and I knew I was fainting. Collapsing on the blazing pavement, I imagined myself being burnt in the sun. Far away people saw me and the Matof bellowed: "Bring him help!"

He was going away to Jeddah and had just passed through the farewell ceremonies which I will describe later. If he interrupted them the Koran would require a complete repetition. Consequently he let someone else

THE APPROACH TO MAHOMET'S BIRTHPLACE
In order to reach the actual room where the prophet's cradle stood, pilgrims have to be descended.
This is owing to subsidence of the ground.

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attend to me. Several men, including a Turkish officer, rushed up and placed slippers over my tender soles. Then I helded to the edennades, where a whole number of sympathisers carried up Zamzam water, saying that this accident was not unprecedented and that I should not feel distressed.

CHAPTER X

MY VISIT TO THE SHEREEF OF MECCA

"THE Shereef is still at Taif." Thus went the reports I repeatedly obtained about the man who ruled the city and who had written that he wanted to see me. My Matof thought Husein Ibn Ali disliked leaving his cool mountain capital during the month of June, which had meanwhile begun. I could not blame the potentate, since the weather in the naked valley of Mecca became hotter than anything I ever lived through even at Bombay. Existence in the pilgrim-house was largely a dreary lounging in the company of people who took one long siesta from noon till Mograb time. I owned no books except the Koran, and only in the evening did I feel enough energy to read that difficult volume.

Once a week I wrote a letter to my wife in Cape Town and once a week I went to the Post Office for her replies. Seldom did I get any. She was unwise enough to register them, the safest method of having one's correspondence embezzled in the Ottoman Empire. Several communications from my mother addressed at first:

"MAHMOUD MOBAREK CHURCHWARD,

"Post Office,

"Suez,

"EGYPT.

"TILL CALLED FOR,"

and then:

"MR. MAHMOUD MOHAREK CHURCHWARD,
"Pilgrim to Mecca,
"c/o British Consul,
"JEDDAH,"

were, however, redirected in English and Turkish to the "House of Sird Omar Wallie, Mecca, Arabia," and arrived by the tinkling Camel-Post that takes its leisurely path across the desert. Every envelope had been torn open and thus I came to know about a censorship. Two months was the average period that passed before a letter posted in London reached me. My own correspondence did not go astray, and the family preserved it as an oddity. During this period I remembered my promise to the Lieutenant on board the *Islamic* so I wrote him a card reading: "Well and happy in Mecca," or words to that effect.

Ordinary Turkish stamps were used in those days. I do not think that the traffic is sufficient to make the Holy City's postmark anything but a great philatelic rarity, especially as cancellations are effected by tearing the tokens in half.

No delivery of letters was made; one had to go to a little white-washed building, inside which a robed official sat behind a deal table ready to receive the correspondence of pilgrims or to prevent anybody walking away with the crescent-adorned mail bags that lay round his feet. The postmaster gave interviews to the public in a dignified but leisurely way. To obtain a stamp took quite a quarter of an hour, and if anybody wished to

buy more than one, careful counting of the available stock preceded the ceremonious handing over. In a dingy white-washed corner one could notice some gleaming brass telegraph instruments linked with the wires running to Jeddah and Taif.

This apparatus presently brought the news that, notwithstanding the season, His Highness would return to Mecca specially in order to meet the English pilgrim.

The tidings pleased me; yet I felt surprised. "Surely," I asked Mahomed Salie, with whom I played chess in the courtyard, "I am not as important as all that?"

The South Sea Islander stroked his smooth face and leant forward. "Between you and me, Haji," he muttered, "I think the Shereef still has a doubt in his mind. He will probably put you to another examination."

Then we continued our game. Meccans are fond of chess, and nearly all citizens I met (I am thought a good player) were skilful with their openings and gambits. In the Bazaar I often noticed little shirted rascals of seven or ten years shifting pieces consisting of pebbles or bones about squares scraped on the earth with a stick.

Such a pastime suits the silent and unemotional Arabs. They like sitting reflectively beside the board slowly working at the strategy which makes all players friends. In their tactics the bearded worthies of the desert differ little from ordinary European enthusiasts, though they are specially careful not to sacrifice men

under their knees is in the uttermost danger of a check-mate.

Apart from chess the favourite amusement during the evenings is "Dama," a word signifying "Blood." When a curious wooden board with 256 squares, i.e. four times as many as are used in the rival game, has been unrolled a set of stones, resembling those used for draughts, is arranged on each side.

Details of "Dama" were explained to me, but I am sorry to admit that the game was rather beyond my comprehension. As far as I could follow the taciturn experts, it resembled "Halma" in many points.

Although the people of Cairo and other Eastern cities delight to play cards this pastime is strictly prohibited at Mecca. The hostility which Western churchmen show on religious grounds also persists here among the Imams. Singing, unless it forms part of a prayer service, likewise remains forbidden. Dancing I never saw; even at Suez the Moslems do not tolerate it. Altogether, the town is a very dour kind of place.

One world-renowned cult is, however, familiar to the Meccans, namely Freemasonry. I am an old member of the craft, with fairly advanced degrees, so it was easy for me to discover unmistakable evidence that numerous Arabs belonged to the brotherhood. No meetings take place within the city but hundreds of local men have been initiated.

The spirit of Freemasonry conforms with the teachings of Islam, and the great numbers of lodges throughout

the Moslem world might surprise the stay-at-home member. Cairo, in fact all Egypt, possesses many brethren; so, too, India and, to a considerable extent, Arabia.

At Mecca I met a great variety. Some were learned scholars, others belonged to lowly professions. Most of them had no acquaintance with Occidental conditions, and felt delighted to meet a colleague from the West.

During the Great War an adventure, which significantly shows the hold this cult has on remote Moslem countries, happened to an eminent Johannesburg mason. He was a military officer in a regiment fighting the Germans in East Africa and the course of campaigning took him and several Tommies into the swamp jungles that cover the Rufiji River delta, where the enemy cruiser *Königsberg* was wrecked. Here lay true equatorial bush—crocodiles and slimy creeks, thorn forests and thick green walls of foliage where slunk leopards and hippos.

Amid a clearing between palm trees in the roughest area of the delta the South African, while out with a reconnoitring and foraging party, found a Swahili village—thatched huts, witch-doctor's beacons and all.

When the soldiers, sweating under their tropical helmets and duck uniforms, approached, naked darkies danced out of the crooked alleys. Among them walked a grave headman in the long white shirt of the East Coast Moslem. He possessed a good deal of Arab blood but was nevertheless completely black.

The Turqum addressed him and a moment later passed on to the next. The khal ruler made a perfectly ordinary parade then, then another and finally a few which the white lodge member did not then understand, but which, during his subsequent advancement, he found to be the prerogative of brethren holding high degrees.

Besides going on the Haj many people visit Mecca to study the Koran. Local teachers (such as the late Syed Zam Omer Wallib whom I mentioned previously) have a vast reputation for their orthodoxy. They may not charge for tuition but take what pupils give them.

A day or two after the wire from Husein Ibn Ali arrived, I looked out of the window and saw many camels going through the streets. "The Sherceef has come to town again," announced Almas, who always knew a lot of gossip. He told me that the ruler generally walked under a gold umbrella carried by slaves. Later on I repeatedly watched the Great Man going to the Kaaba, and found that this was Husein's habit on all his outings. The parasol possessed many tassels and heavy embroideries, likewise a fantastically gilded handle. Seven or eight banners, stitched with Koran verses, always flapped over the numerous train which followed him about.

Some hours after the Sherceef's entry into Mecca a self-assured, elderly stranger reached the lounge where I was writing out a Koran verse for Hadjar who wanted it for an amulet. "His Highness wishes you to go to

the Palace," he declared, on learning that I was Mahmoud Mobarek Churchward. Then the man left and the Matof said it would be impolite to keep the Shereef waiting. I dressed in my Friday best and joined Mahomed Salie, who had quickly perfumed his beard. We hurried up a number of crooked lanes. In the doorway of one shop hung carcasses stamped with an Arabic seal very like the imprint usual in English abattoirs. This reminded the Matof, who was in high spirits, of a yarn which he forthwith told me.

A local butcher had lately been selling a rich and tasty variety of Kabob, a type of rissole. The price of the dainty was much below the usual figure, which had gone up owing to bad times. From the roofs of houses nearby certain envious competitors watched the slaughter-yard behind the butchery and discovered the tradesman preparing mincemeat out of the carcasses of numerous street dogs which he had somehow lured into his den.

"What happened?" I asked.

"He had his ears clipped," exclaimed the Matof, "and after being bastinadoed was put backwards on a donkey and driven from the town. Since then," he smiled, "the Shereef has caused all the meat to be stamped before it can be sold."

By this time we reached a very long, eight-storeyed block, Husein's Palace. It looked extremely plain from outside, with bare rows of windows, and the premises resembled nothing so much as a large factory. Passing a sentry akin to the one who served the Sultan of

Mekallah, we handed our slippers to an effusive gate-keeper. He directed us into a large plaza filled with men idling about the marble pavement or waiting at their ease on divans built along the further wall. They stared hard at me, and I heard somebody say: "That is what an Englishman looks like."

Behind this yard lay another, where Arabs and Bedouins in very bright-coloured robes carried medieval muskets and belts with long pistols. Round the big open space rose the tall mysterious façades of shuttered living quarters. The warriors all greeted and one sheikh asked me to march ahead to a room where an upholstered couch was bricked into an alcove and where a heavy carpet brought welcome relief to my naked toes. On the corner of the divan squatted a medium-sized man with a short grey beard and a very dark skin. He glanced at me shrewdly and Mahomed Salie muttered: "The Shereef!" Husein's turban was white, likewise the linen gown that was folded elegantly around him. Behind his head two or three negro slaves slowly moved ostrich feather fans mounted on sticks. Officials in native costumes waited in the Presence.

When the Shereef saw me he stood up and greeted. At this I came nearer, took his hand and kissed it. He offered me a seat and called to the slaves: "Bring tea!" A handsome Arab carried in a brass tray chased with many patterns. The next thing was that Husein Ibn Ali asked me in good old drawing-room style: "Do you take milk?"

My Matof, who evidently imagined me incapable of answering this question, now sidled towards the throne and said I did. The courtesy implied by the Shereef's offer was greater than might appear. On a summer morning about the hour of eleven or twelve, the time this happened, it is almost certain that all the milk in Mecca will be sour. Here in the Palace, however, I got some fresh from the cow (or goat). Tea was served in little glass cups strangely like a certain brand lately produced in America. Each held a protective plate of silver to keep the heat, which was prodigious, off one's hand. The Shereef used a China brew of real Oriental excellence. Nobody spoke anything while we sipped, for such is the etiquette. I awaited my host's questions, but the latter first called to his servants: "Fetch the Imam!"

About twenty minutes passed, during which I had a real chance of studying the dignified chieftain. He was the father of the present King Feisal of Iraq, and a descendant of one of the most illustrious families in Islam. Since the day I saw him he lost the Shereefate of Mecca in the turmoil of the Great War. Recent pilgrims tell me that his successor is much stricter even than he was, but I do not think it easy for any Moslem to surpass Husein Ibn Ali in orthodoxy.

A young man, the son who afterwards became the ruler at Bagdad, looked in while I waited. He appeared a good-looking, gentlemanly sort of fellow, with something of the British public-school manner about him.

By and by a bowing and moving of arms commenced near the doorway and I knew that the Imam had arrived. The elderly sage who gave everybody the Greeting of Peace was no ordinary priest, but the Cadi of Mecca himself. Like the Shereef, he seemed to know the details of my case. For a moment he peered sternly at me and then kissed his superior's hand.

"Start!" briefly commanded the Shereef.

"What are the five Pillars of Islam?" inquired the scholar, settling down.

"Ashadour Allah Illah wa ashadour Mahomed rasullalah.

Karma Salla.

Ta zakaht.

Som Ramadan.

Haj el beit maistakar illa sebilla."*

"A good answer," said the Cadi; "but why did you wear a cap at Jeddah?"

"I did not," was my brief explanation.

For about an hour he put further questions, but in a very friendly way, for he nodded his assent all the time. Then the Cadi asked to see my passport, also the recommendations from the Cape Town Imams, on which latter paper he could read nothing except the signatures. Both the Shereef and he examined these documents carefully and at last the ruler said: "Haji, that will be enough. Send for the Indian."

"You will not catch him," I put in. The Matof was beaming. He rose from the spot on the carpet where

* See page 45.

he had been sitting and asked in a voice loud enough for everybody to hear: "Is not the Shereef a wise man, a just man? By Allah."

"Your master will eat with me soon," Husein called to Mahomed Salie when we got ready to leave.

Before we saw the pilgrim-house in the distance a slave ran up and shouted that the Shereefah wanted to see me at once. I went into the courtyard and heard her shrill voice through the grating: "I am going to claim a big sum from that Indian for the insult to my house!" she cried. "The rascal is a rich man."

This latter statement was confirmed when her Matof spoke to the people with whom the fellow lived, but my forecast about his complete disappearance likewise proved true. During the next few days I heard a great many rude criticisms about people from Hindustan. "They are not good Moslems," declared numerous Meccans, and when I asked the reason, everybody complained that they made their pilgrimage a business outing and actually took along silks to sell for profit on the way.

The pleasant outcome of my meeting with the Shereef brought me many new friends. They came in dozens, kissed my hand, drank coffee and put questions about my history and the peculiarities of Europeans. Most of the strangers were learned but impecunious, as is the characteristic of scholars in all continents. Rich people had nearly all gone to the hills. Imam Abdul Mallik delightedly told me that although a pauper himself, his wife, to whom her property was secured by Mahomedan

law, counted as a rich woman, and possessed a house at Taif, where she had relations. "Soon we are going there," he said, "and we will feel honoured if you will live in our home."

"Wait a little," I answered; "in a short time I may come."

My callers had various standard questions. Nearly everybody demanded to know why I was clean-shaven.

"This," I said, "is the custom in the West."

Stroking the growths upon their own hairy chins the men shook their heads: "If you stay, Haji, you too will have to grow a beard."

"Are your brothers and sisters also Moslems?" I was asked on another occasion.

"Unfortunately not," ran my reply.

"Not everybody is favoured by Allah," thoughtfully answered a Syed.

Once a number of Bedouins strode in and wanted to ascertain what Christians believed. They were very insistent, and I did my best to set out details of the creed which I myself had originally followed. In the evening they came again.

"There is something we forgot," declared an old sheikh. "We hear the Christians have three Gods, and that they are one in spite of that. How can they be one? Look at that comet," the old man's finger pointed to Halley's wonderful beacon. "That belongs to our God, to Allah. Where are the other two Gods of the Christians?"

"I do not understand it," I put in.

"And did your father and mother believe in that?" demanded the sheikh's son, a middle-aged gentleman who had the reputation of being occasionally engaged in highway robbery.

"My father," I said, "approved of the Koran and advised me to read it."

Delightedly my listeners nodded their heads, and asked how he came to be such a good man.

"He had a quarrel with the English Church," I answered, "and so he believed in only one God." Using the nearest Arabic equivalent I could find I told them how my father had been a churchwarden and overseer of the parish at Aldershot, when I was a boy.

"He quarrelled," I explained, "with the Imam (people there call him the Vicar), of the Christian Mosque about a Wakf or charitable trust of money which had been left by a pious man long ago in the reign of the Malekal Elizabeth. The sheikh, whom the English called the squire, owned a castle near the town, and had got the income from the Wakf which came out of a piece of ground called Grove Farm.

"My father discovered in old papers that the Grove Farm had been left to the poor, but no man, not even the imam, knew which piece of land really was so called. Then another churchwarden or guardian of the Mosque helped him to look among the papers, and one day they found a drawing that showed where the ground lay. The imam had been very hostile about the search, but when the papers appeared he agreed it was a good act

Meanwhile, however, the quarrel had taken place, and although the poor got the Wakf, my father never went to church again."

"And what did the sheikh of the village do?" inquired the Arabs.

"He was a very proud man," I said, "and a very rich one, yet he risked his money, and not only lost the Wakf but soon after his entire property. When he died he was keeping a tobacconist's shop, in Aldershot, which for a noble in my country is a great disgrace."

"Your father," observed the oldest listener, "was a good man. He must have been a secret Moslem. Allah sowed the seed in him, and you, Mobarek, are the fruit."

The mention of our nobility interested the Arabs. They thought an English lord must be a very small man compared with a Pasha, just as the Sultan of Turkey was a much bigger man than the King of England. "In fact," declared one Bedouin, "he is the biggest man in the world." Throughout our conversations the policy of Constantinople was always considered the deciding factor in political questions.

Incidentally it may not be known that thousands of Moslems here believe Queen Victoria revered the Prophet.

The chief argument used by the Bazaar-loungers to support this contention concerns the first Mecca pilgrimage of the Cape Town Malays. The latter were originally taken to South Africa as slaves when Holland captured the East Indian archipelago during the seventeenth century. For over two hundred years their descendants

in Africa, though Moslems, had been unable to undertake the Haj owing to poverty, but about 1875 a pioneer party arranged to visit the Kaaba. It was found that the quickest way of getting there was to travel via England, whence ships occasionally left for Arabia. Several dozen men, their wives and youngsters, arrived at London by a Cape mail-steamer. The Malays wore curious cone-shaped straw hats customary among their community, and this unusual headgear attracted the attention of the Queen while the pilgrims stood outside Buckingham Palace admiring the grandeur of the "Malekah's" dwelling. Her Majesty sent an equerry to find out who the queer strangers might be, and when she heard they were Colonial Malays going to Mecca she straightway commanded that the party be shown to her drawing-room.

Bewildered and frightened, the worthy fishermen and carpenters stumbled down the corridors and into the hall where sat the Little Old Lady who ruled half the world. To the scandal of several Court officials the men kept on their hats, but reprimanding gestures were cut short by the Queen, who evidently knew the Moslem custom. She asked the Malays about their plans. The pilgrims, though they understood English perfectly well, felt too flustered to reply. Her Majesty inquired: "What do these people talk?" Nobody in her suite knew. She tried German, Dutch, even French. The swarthy strangers stayed tongue-tied.

Then she suddenly saw a baby head peering timidly under his father's cloak. "Bring it here," the royal lady

beckoned. The Malay carried his child to her chair and Queen Victoria then kissed it on its forehead.

Hereupon the silence was broken. An old Imam salaamed and said that her slaves really had a wish.

"What is that?" demanded Her Majesty.

"We want a sheep to kill in our way, in the way of the Koran," answered the Mussulman. "Since we left Cape Town we have eaten no meat."

The monarch gave a gentleman-in-waiting this unusual matter to attend to, and before she dismissed the pilgrims she said gravely: "When you are at the Kaaba don't forget to pray for your Queen."

Long after I myself came to know the baby who got that kiss, an old, ragged newspaper-seller in Adderley Street, Cape Town. This true story, which I believe has never been published in any book, did more to establish Queen Victoria's prestige among the Moslem millions than all the conquests of her Generals and Acts of her Parliaments. Together with Her Majesty's predilection for Oriental bodyguards, it gave rise to the fanciful idea that she was secretly a Mahomedan.

Some merchants wanted to know what the Bible contained. I explained: "It is a good book, almost the same as the Koran, only the latter is shorter."

"Is there not a lot about the Jews in the Bible?" put in another friend.

"Yes," I said. "But the Jews only read half of it."

This puzzled them very much.

"The Jews are strange people," declared a butcher, "but they eat the right meat."

The general opinion was that they were not quite as infidel as the Christians. Yet it would be wrong to assume they are liked by Mahomedans, because the bad feeling caused by the Prophet's quarrel with Israel has never quite died down. This is strange, since his mother was a Jewess.

Some days later when I happened to enter the quadrangle of the Matof's house, I heard the words, "Embarek! Embarek!" delightedly called by Zain Wallie's widow.

"The Shereef sent a command this morning that you should eat with him at noon. Put on your best clothes," she continued, as though I were a small child, "and see that you are clean."

She added that the messenger had wanted to know what food and what drinks I preferred. His inquiries were also of a negative nature, for he wished to hear about my pet aversions.

"What did you tell him?" I naïvely inquired. "Oh," replied the lady, "I just guessed and told them that you wanted tea with cow's milk." (At Mecca the produce of goats and camels is much drunk.) I felt sorry the Shereefah had not mentioned my dislike for beans stewed in oil, which often spoilt my Oriental dinners.

Mahomed Salie, the Matof, came in, looking important. He pulled out a heavy silver turnip watch and said that I had better start at once. The Mecca

timepieces are all made in Germany, and their dials do not show modern European figures, but old Arabic symbols which do not resemble our notation in the least.

While we walked through the midday when most of the shops were shut, I could see the Shereef's messenger running far ahead of me in order to tell my host what final changes in the menu my tastes might require. Two other Matofs from the pilgrim house thought the opportunity of eating with the Rich and Great so excellent that they hurried after us and said: "We, too, are coming, Haji."

Beside the main gate the sentry salaamed much more vigorously than during my first visit.

Bearded domestics took off our shoes and led us into the same courtyard where I had met the ruler previously. Several Arabs, wearing heavy silk clothes and obviously men of consequence, embraced me. The three Matofs made a respectful rush for them, and kissed their hands just as the panelled Moorish door opened to allow the Shereef and his son to come in. Servants waving heavy ostrich feather fans strove to keep the air cool. In their belts they carried scimitars and daggers worked with silver. Both the Chieftains dressed far more simply than their courtiers. The Shereef wore a turban with a strip of muslin (hamama) around it. Feisal, then a man of about thirty, came dressed in brown camel-hair cloth after the fashion of a Bedouin. A gold band glittered over the folded cloth upon his head.

"Salaam Aleikam, Kaif Alack." (Peace be with you. Welcome here) began the Shereef. I kissed his hand and then replied with the usual questions about his welfare, employing the Egyptian Arabic, which he understood. Divans loaded under quilted upholstery were pulled forward and we took our ease thereon leaving the courtiers to stand. A wave of the royal hand sent some slaves running through a doorway. Half a minute later they marched back carrying two broad, stumpy-legged platforms. Each was about the size of a dinner table, and six or seven people could sit round it cross-legged. Our cushions having been pushed nearer, the servants bowing to everybody, brought a great number of little dishes upon trays. Some were of brass, others partly of brass and partly of porcelain, others of reddish earthenware covered with patterns. They looked rather like crucibles, and the resemblance became more evident owing to the presence of tiny brass lids on each container. Knives and forks remained absent, but there were plenty of spoons, some very beautiful and Eastern, others very hideous and Brummagem.

First of all I was given soup, a kind of mutton broth which tasted excellently. This gave way to a confection of crystallized almonds. Then came some stew and another "goody," made out of sugared maize. The chef, as usual in Arabia, seemed very fond of nuts, and in some form or other put them into every one of the sweets, which invariably followed the meat dishes.

Not much was spoken. The Shereef offered me the food himself, occasionally pointing with his finger at what he considered a particularly good morsel. Feisal understood a little English and presently grew more talkative. Once, when he could not make himself clear, he called an interpreter, who spoke with a most astonishing South African accent. I looked at him and asked, "What is your name?"

"Syed Mohammed Allowey," he answered.

"Where did you learn English?"

"I was born," said the translator, "at Mafeking in Africa."

Naturally I wanted to know how he had come to Mecca.

"Come to my house some time," he suggested, "and I will tell you my story. Now we must listen to the Shereef."

The latter grunted, "I am going to Taif again soon."

Hereat the Syed Mohammed Allowey whispered: "All is well with you now. Take no notice of what people say."

A dish of stuffed fowl went round.

"How did you become a Moslem?" inquired the owner of the palace. I gave him an account of my conversion in Egypt many years ago and this, being translated, interested the spectators very much. I should have mentioned that the meal resembled those taken by the old French Kings, for anybody could come and look on. Amongst those especially invited to watch

me eat was my worthy friend Abdul Mallik, gorgeously dressed and with a great deal of jewellery on his neck. Through the conversation I could hear comments about myself. One man hoarsely cried in a kind of stage whisper: "He looks sincere," to which another person behind me replied, "I like his appearance," etc.

Husein Ibn Ali had heard of Burton's visit to Mecca, and seemed inclined to believe that a man who could come as a real pilgrim without being discovered must have been a secret convert.

"He made one mistake that nearly cost him his life," I remarked, "and he killed the man who saw it."

"Burton was a brave man," remarked the Shereef. "By learning the Koran well he did an act of merit even though he was a kafir."

I mentioned several newer travellers who had written about Mecca, but, while acknowledging the possibility that some accounts might be first-hand, Feisal thought most of them had merely been taken from the stories of real Moslems visiting the Kaaba. This opinion, rightly or mistakenly, is general in Mecca.

For myself, I am certain from errors in the text of several European books, that the people who claimed to have accomplished the pilgrimage never actually saw the Holy City. This does not apply to the great explorers like Burton or Burckhardt.

The Shereef promised a special guard to protect my return when I left for Jeddah. Then he spasmodically

jumped the topic to my smooth cheeks. Repeatedly he shook his head.

"No, no, Haji. If you stay in Mecca you must grow a beard."

Coffee and tea were served. Feisal told me that the latter drink, which is not popular in Arabia, had been bought specially for me. Husein's embossed silver tea-set would have awakened cupidity in museum curators. As usual the coffee possessed a rich, almost alcoholic taste (I know the flavour of liquor from the days before my conversion). The aroma was produced by a liberal admixture of loban called "Balm of Mecca" in some European pharmacopoeias. Men find this rock upon the hills around the town. Like coal, it is inflammable. Frequently I have picked up pieces on the open mounds beyond the walls, and youngsters love to go there in order that they may put matches thereto and produce a clean, very sweet-smelling vapour that has antiseptic properties.

Loban is put into beverages, into cigarettes, and when burnt in stuffy places it purifies the air. Outwardly the balm looks a greyish crystalline mass, but when aflame it melts to a kind of sticky resin.

The Shereef became increasingly friendly. He wanted to know about South Africa, and felt greatly shocked on hearing my Adderley Street adventure with the tarbush.

"What will these infidels be doing next?" he called, and made an appropriate quotation from the Koran.

Young Feisal now offered hand-made cigarettes. Like the coffee, they contained loban, and the interpreter gave me a gilded matchbox to light them. To every parcel of "tandstikkens" sold in Arabia some little bit of tinsel must adhere, in order that the native's instinct for the gorgeous may be satisfied. Factories in Europe and Japan which supply the market always attend to this detail. In like manner, the great sewing-machine corporations turn out a special model for Persia and Arabia. Usually this is of a bright green or scarlet colour and adorned with plentifully glittering scrollwork. Only a few years ago an Eastbound cargo steamer was shipwrecked near Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and the damaged cargo, which included many hundreds of Singers, was disposed of among the coloured people ashore. In consequence I often come across these curiously-hued appliances when I go through the Union.

I had stayed about an hour, and sensed that the visit was sufficiently long. Once more I kissed the hands of the Shereef, who in his turn bade me walk along a pathway perfumed with ambergris. Whilst turning and bowing to the courtiers I heard Husein say: "I thank Allah that such a man has visited me."

Back at my house the First, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth citizens of the neighbourhood gathered in order to learn about my reception. Behind the scenes in the Palace, Mahomed Salie, together with his two colleagues, had tucked away a very good feed for themselves. Now they rendered a picturesque but not quite

truthful account of the magnificence attending my visit. However, it was very hot and the Arabs chose to believe the more marvellous versions, so I ceased arguing, and let Almas, the slave, put up a thick sandalwood screen over which he poured water incessantly, producing a most refreshing fragrance throughout my room. Owing to the weather the Shereefah, I heard, was preparing to leave for Taif in the near future, and the Wakeel asked whether I wished to come along.

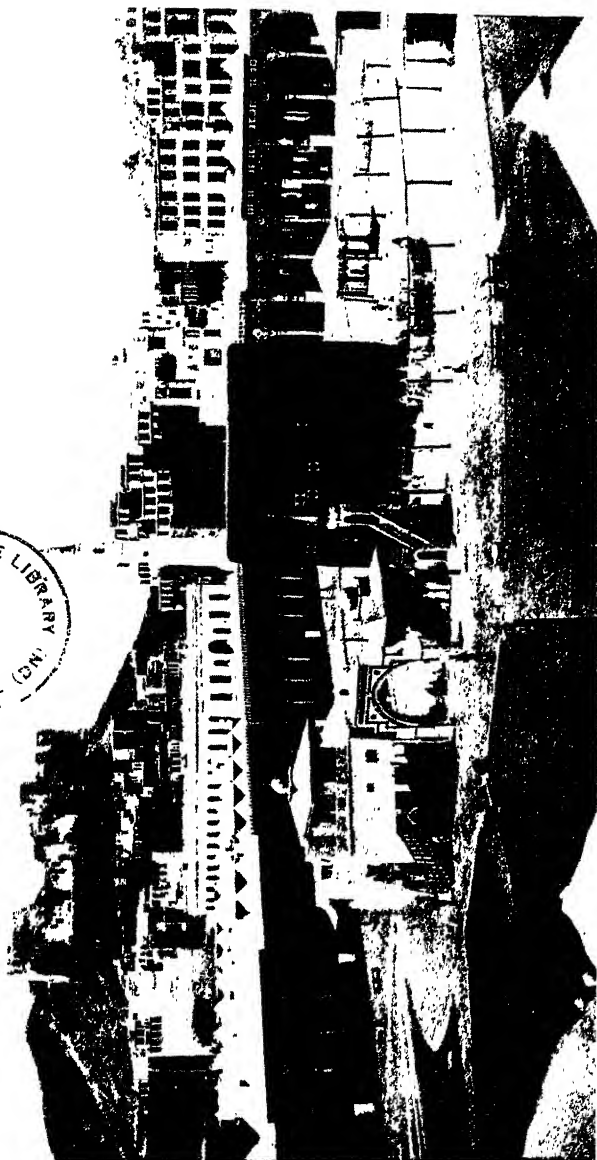
"Certainly," I answered, "anything to get away from this climate."

That evening I saw a very strange man in the Haram. While I was executing my rakahts, this fellow, a thin figure with tousled hair and tangled beard and nothing but a loin-cloth around him, started jumping about the Kaaba Temple calling: Allah! Allah! Allah! Thin and knotted were the arms he waved about, and when he came near me I felt rather scared.

My fellow-worshippers, both men and women, went on with their chanting, but after the stranger stood directly below a yellow lamp and showed me his staring eyes surrounded by hair, I could not restrain myself from asking Abdul Mallik: "Who is that?"

"Do not be afraid," replied the Malay, "He is a Holy Man, but mad."

It was no use arguing with the Arabs. The more anybody raves, the more sacred they think him. Later, I often saw this unfortunate and several other lunatics roaming through the Bazaars, shrieking and sometimes



A CLOSE-UP OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES

This had to be taken early in the morning when very few people had entered the sacred enclosure. Each of the structures with steps is a pulpit. The building on the hill is a Turkish fort.



even touching the people who, always gently, shook them off.

Next morning, the palace messenger once more arrived and demanded an interview with me. He announced that the Shereef sent a parcel he held under his arm. It proved a long leaden tube, about three inches in diameter. I had never yet seen such an object but Mahomed Salie certainly had, for he smacked his lips and skilfully unscrewed a little lid at one end. This brought to light a long, thin handle which I pulled.

Out came . . . something white, smooth and shapeless, with a sweet smell . . . ice-cream! In all my life I was never so surprised. Here at Mecca, amid the desert, where, as Kipling says of another place, "a man can raise a thirst!"

Eagerly I took the spoon (that was the long handle at which I pulled), and put some of the deliciously cold contents to my lips. Alas! Sweetness such as I had never thought possible, worse than the flavour of saccharine, went tingling down my neck. Despite all its heavenly iciness the taste was intolerable for a European. This I rank among the great disappointments of my life. With astonished eyes the Matof saw me put down the tube and cease eating.

"What, Haji, is it not good?"

"I don't know," I said noncommittally. "Try it."

Mahomed did not take long to follow this command. His smacking lips showed that the dainty certainly was to his taste.

"Where did the Shereef get the ice?" I inquired.

Salie stated there was a small machine at the Palace but that hardly anybody outside the princely family ever tasted its produce. "It is a great favour for you, Mahmoud," he added.

I made a heroic decision. "Divide the ice-cream among the household," I ordered after having gulped a little more out of courtesy. Within ten minutes all the residents from the Shereefah down to the slave who washed the ekrams was getting a spoon or two of the precious confection, and their delighted chuckles became the dirge of the only ice-cream I ever received in Arabia.

CHAPTER XI

DAY BY DAY IN MECCA

SOON after my adventure with the ice-cream I was asked to a neighbouring house to hear a professional story-teller, of a kind common throughout Mecca, spin his yarns. And I had the joy of following the sing-song versions of several *Arabian Nights* tales in their original text. Lewdness, which characterises many Oriental stories and particularly those of Scheherazade, is firmly tabooed in the Holy Town, where everything must have some moral or religious meaning. During my stay I heard a good number of tales, some very well told. It is an error to think that immoral stories do not anger the pious Moslem, for the most outspoken parts of the *Arabian Nights* are thought just as objectionable at Mecca as they are in the West. The majority of the yarns deal with religious parables or anecdotes concerning Saints and Prophets. I will set out one which Abdul Mallik of Cape Town declared was perfectly true, as he had been present when it happened.

At Mena, a small town lying in the desert between Mecca and Medina, a caravan some time before I came, spent a night at the Saffer Khan (free lodgings), an

ancient, partly ruinous, building with a huge central room. There, resting upon their own bedding and eating their own food, traders and pilgrims, soldiers and Bedouins, could take shelter by virtue of an ancient charitable endowment.

An old merchant from Mecca was going to Medina in order to buy carpets, and when the cooking fires had burnt low, the blankets and saddlebags had been made into rough beds and the last prayers all said, this man, who had been spending the evening with calculations about his profits, took off his clothes, hung a valuable silver watch on a nail hammered into the wall and fell asleep.

In the cold before dawn travellers began to rise for early worship. While unrolling his own prayer mat, the merchant looked up and found the watch had gone. Because it cost him much money, the trader of course felt very sad. He peered among all his bales and luggage, but saw nothing. So he started wailing and calling upon the Prophet and the Twelve Imams to help him find the thief. The inside of the Saffer Khan was almost empty, for other members of the caravan were in the open, making their rakahts. One old sheikh however noticed the distressed merchant and said: "Friend, I see you have trouble."

"How should I not?" cried the traveller, and told his adventure.

"Do you know who has slept here?" asked the wise-looking stranger.

"Alas, no," answered the merchant; "last night I

did not see anything save my calculations and took no account of those men who were around me."

The old sheikh thought for a time and said, "Let us first pray; then I will find out who did it."

They joined the other worshippers in the twilight and as soon as the last rakaht had been finished went back into the building. Yonder the slaves prepared a number of braziers in order to boil breakfast coffee. The sheikh seized a piece of charcoal from one fire that had burnt low and drew a profile face with an eye and a nose, very roughly on the white-washed wall. The men around, though they knew the Prophet does not allow people to sketch the human countenance, thought that the learned man must have a good reason and waited in silence.

"Has any person left," loudly called the sheikh, "who was with us here last night?"

The Leader of the Caravan walked around and counted everybody. "We had forty-one travellers," he said, "and now we have only forty. One man here is gone."

Vaguely three or four people remembered a stranger, but nobody knew his name or who he was.

"Enough," exclaimed the sheikh. He stood in front of the face and started chanting chapters from the Koran and numerous mystic books. Then he pulled an ordinary nail from some old woodwork and with a stone hammered it into that part of the drawing which represented the cheek. For several minutes the sage muttered many verses which all seemed to

have a certain bearing on the crime of theft. Again he struck blows and drove in the nail as far as it would go.

While taking their morning meal the travellers talked about the charm, and the sheikh told the merchant: "Wait!"

Camels knelt to let their riders climb on their humps, saddle cloths were thrown over donkeys, bales were tied firmer, bells jangled, those men who had muskets primed them against robbers, and within an hour the caravan started to move through the morning into the desert. The thief's victim was among the last to take the saddle. He still walked about the empty Saffer Khan at Mena searching for his stolen timepiece. Presently the sheikh looked through a vaulted doorway and smilingly called: "Have you found it?"

"No," answered the merchant. Just then he glanced at the drawing that still remained upon the wall. On the very nail which the sage had hammered into it dangled the watch.

Of course the old man felt triumphant, and the trader gave him a handsome gift before the caravan reached Medina.

Having finished his business, the merchant travelled back to Mecca and there started asking which people had lately visited the other Holy Town. At a coffee-house in the Bazaar he was told that a certain Arab whose name was unfamiliar to him went to Medina about the time the watch disappeared. He sought the

travellers' house and when he rapped the door, a man came out with a big sore on the centre of one cheek. Casually the merchant mentioned the theft and how the sheikh had made a charm. "Allah!" cried he Arab looking very frightened, "I am glad he did not put the nail in the eye of the drawing."

This story appears noteworthy, inasmuch as it is an Eastern adaptation of the ancient English superstition which was embodied in "The Leech of Folkestone," one of Barham's *Ingoldsby Legends*. In that version wax images of the victim were pierced with needles.

A sheikh of a somewhat different kind from the afore-said magician invited me to dinner soon after. His servant brought the Shereefah a message of friendship in which she was asked to let Haji Mahmoud be the guest of the Guardian of Zamzam. This worthy counts among the Meccan celebrities since he watches over the famous Holy Place. I therefore gladly accepted, and the sheikh arranged for a time when the stars would be propitious. The Shereefah sent word to me and gave some good advice. "Be careful," she said through the grating, "and keep indoors as much as possible for a week." Hereto the lady added tips about my conduct at the sheikh's house, and these I duly kept in mind.

The Guardian did not live at the well but in an ancient, paintless house which must have been built four or five hundred years ago. A very dark door gave entrance to narrow stairs of stone. Within an unpretentious

room sat eight or ten people, mostly friends of the sheikh. Mahomed Salie, the Matof, also attended, and he evidently had been bragging to them about his eminent client, because they treated me with much honour and asked that I should make Ossa, that is lead the afternoon prayers, which consist of four rakahts. The sheikh, a dignified, elderly Arab, then clapped his hands like an *Arabian Nights* Sultan and let an astounding number of slaves bring in the table and the dinner. So many servants appeared that I really believe he must have borrowed a number for show. In Mecca this is often done. We ate off a platform only eight inches high and surrounded by so many rugs that one sank into them.

Talk at the outset remained subdued. One man asked if I was a Hanifi or Shafi Mahomedan. He had noticed in the Haram that I prayed after the manner of the latter sect. I said I did not regard the imam Ali as reverently as the Hanifi, who rank him with his uncle, the Prophet. This piece of information was not to the taste of my questioner, who turned out to be of the latter belief himself. During the meal the sheikh of Zamzam suddenly remembered something. He shouted "Where is the drink for the Englishman?" whereupon a slave ran in holding a tray with a lonely bottle of Holbrook's Worcester Sauce. This was probably the strangest place in which the widely-distributed commodity was ever consumed.

I noticed that the Meccans only used loaf sugar, never the granulated kind. Tinned groceries are seldom

sold. A certain trade is done in jam but no Western maker can compete with the Arabs in respect of preserved dates, veritable poems of deliciousness, prepared on the spot. I found women cooking on paraffin and primus stoves, but in most houses charcoal fires still hold the field. For lamps a particularly coarse and smelly kind of oil is burnt.

During the meal conversation turned to the subject of European clothing, which interested everybody because in Mecca the only attempts at Western costume were the uniforms of the soldiers. One guest asked: "Why do the Kafirs (infidels) at Jeddah wear such foolish garments?"

"Which garments do you mean?" I inquired.

"Well," said he irritably, "those narrow pipes of cloth they pull over their legs and those stiff white rings they have round their necks, and" he waved his hand, "all their other nonsense."

I told them the chief reason was the Europeans did not know better.

For myself, I felt so accustomed to Eastern habits that I found it quite uncomfortable to sit on a chair again when I came home.

Having smoked a water-pipe, flavoured as usual with loban, I pulled out a little piece of tissue paper into which had been wrapped a sovereign. This was my gift to the host who, I certainly think, did quite well out of the visit. Full of dignity he took the coin and let me go away. During the course of my stay such gifts ran into a great deal of money, and before

I left I must have spent scores of pounds in this fashion.

Among my luggage rested a camera which I now longed to use. Every educated pilgrim to whom I had spoken warned me to be extremely careful about doing anything likely to mark me as a spy. I, therefore, did not dare to climb near those picturesque hills whose fortifications would undoubtedly have given an artistic framework to several panoramas. Like most snapshots previously taken in Mecca, my views of the Kaaba were focused from the roof of the galleries surrounding the Haram. Very few people appear on the photographs, since it was advisable to take all pictures early in the morning when no enthusiastic worshippers were likely to knife me. Unfortunately my stock of snapshots remained small. With the camera bulging under my robe I shinned up the staircase used by muezzins, clicked the shutter and hurried down just as the men who called to sunrise prayers began wondering what the Englishman wanted to do so far above the courtyard. Tradition goes against photography. Formerly one could buy a few prints made by Indians, but after the date of my visit, the newer and more orthodox Shereef forbade the sale of further views. Negatives therefore have become most valuable, and I would advise all folk possessing any to retain them because the chances are that they cannot be replaced. I also cherish what sketches I possess. Even though made indoors from the very roughest scribbling and from memory they could never be reconstructed out of mere descriptions.

Punishment for snapshot experts nowadays consists of the destruction of the camera and possibly the hacking off of the hand that took the photograph.

I felt somewhat surprised to meet no dervishes in such a religious town. These fanatics are, I discovered, not much loved at Mecca. Their extravagant dances, self-woundings and trance displays annoy the pious, and when any wanderers arrive they receive so few gifts that most of them prefer to remain in Persia, Turkey, Syria, Egypt and other countries more favourable to their trade.

In consequence of my invitation to the Sheikh of Zamzam's house I got a similar message from another worthy I had nearly forgotten, Syed Mohammed Allowey, the interpreter for the Shereef, who had so unexpectedly disclosed his South African birth on the occasion of the Palace banquet. This young man came secretly because he was a competitor of the Shereefah Zain Wallie, a rival Matof. I willingly agreed to visit his pilgrim house in order to learn how he had come to Mecca. The Syed, whose extremely thin face looked refined and distinguished, received me in a spotless linen robe of particularly delicate weave. His English was bad yet I could follow the ungrammatical words, which sufficed for conversation.

On giving me a seat in his simple living-room Allowey confessed that while I had been under suspicion the Shereef, knowing we both came from Africa, sent a messenger to him. Husein had been vastly surprised to find the Matof could tell nothing about me.

"How," I asked, "did you settle here?"

"My mother," answered the Syed, "was a Malay woman, living at Mafeking, the daughter of a trader there. One day an Arab came on the train that goes to Rhodesia. He was travelling through the country in order to teach the religion, and arranged to marry my mother. For a few years my parents stayed in Africa, but while I was a little boy, we came here."

"And how did you like Africa?"

"I have almost forgotten the place," he said; "it is a dry country."

"Not all the towns lie on the edge of the desert like Mafeking," I argued. This produced some questions concerning the Dominion from friends of the Matof.

"What," said the imam, "is this hole where diamonds are found?"

"Kimberley, you mean?"

"That is the name, the Cape Malay pilgrims told me about it. How do they find the stones?"

Being a pioneer of the Griqualand West Gem Diggings, I was able to give the interested Meccans a fairly detailed notion of mining as practised at De Beers.

"It is wrong," exclaimed the imam, "to dig holes into Allah's Earth. The Law says that if a man finds a diamond, it must lie on the surface, otherwise it has no magic powers."

"The Kafirs (infidels) have a worse place in Africa," remarked a Hakim or Doctor who, by the way, always

carried a wallet of drugs at his belt. "They dig down to Gehenna for gold."

"That is at Johannesburg," I explained. "There are many mines there."

"Yes, yes," chorused my listeners, "Allah will punish them for breaking open the ground."

According to the strict Moslem code, mining of any kind is forbidden. At Mecca all the rock used for building must be picked from the surface. On the hills I saw some caves where material for grindstones could be cut without going below the soil. Mohammed Alloway mentioned dynamite, "Gunpowder with devils inside it," which he considered especially taboo. Nevertheless, the sinking of wells is sometimes undertaken, and for this purpose wild-eyed, tousled diviners go about carrying "dowsing" sticks.

After our discussion on mining we talked about other countries. Concerning India everybody seemed quite well-informed, and the same applied to the bulk of Asia. Europe, however, was a very nebulous region where the people occupied themselves chiefly by eating pig.

Owing to their ridiculous habit of shaving, the men there were generally very ugly and effeminate-looking. The Christian religion, like Islam, was divided into two sects, something like Shafi and Shiah. London seemed a very big town, travellers said bigger than Cairo or Constantinople. The old Malekah, who always behaved so well to the Moslem people, died several years ago.

"Do any mosques exist in England?" asked the imam. I replied that we had one or two, and thereby astonished the diners very much.

That England was an island kingdom also proved news for these Meccans.

"Just like Zanzibar," declared the Syed.

The Hakim desired to hear whether the Kafirs knew anything about Mecca.

"Not much," I answered, "but it is proverbial as a place for pilgrimages." Then I amused them by telling of a picture a well-known English newspaper once published. It had been excellently drawn, and purported to show the Kaaba, which was represented as a red-hot stone upon which Arabs gazed ecstatically until they became blinded.

"Poor Kafirs," muttered the Hakim. "How should they know about Allah and His Prophet."

"Maybe," I suggested, "the artist got the idea from stories of pilgrims who shut their eyes when they kiss the Holy Stone. Many Europeans think well of Mahomet," I put in. "The more they learn about Islam the greater is their respect."

Allowey mentioned that thousands of Christians made the Haj to Jerusalem where the Malik Suleiman built his Temple and where Christ lay buried. "It is a Holy Town," he said; "Moslems go there to pray in the Mosque of Omar."

On this occasion we ate a great deal of fruit which, Mohammed Allowey explained, came from Taif by mel. According to his description the growing of this

commodity was the only industry at the health resort. Slaves carried in various types of "Angel's Food," containing oranges, limes, lemons, melons, bananas and grapes. Meccans are great fruit-eaters. I averaged two whole melons a day during my sojourn. Through one window that faced the courtyard, I could see our refreshments being cooled. At Mecca this is done in an unusual and simple way. The sun evaporates water from wet cloths surrounding the lemonade and salad dishes, a practical application of a principle in thermodynamics which causes the food to become icy.

As at all the entertainments I attended the guests remained very grave. In fact I do not think that I ever saw anybody heartily laughing while I lived in the Holy Town.

Once, as I lay in the dark under my mosquito net upon the roof of the Shereefah's house, I suddenly heard a dull commotion through the distant night. For some minutes I drowsed, but presently I became conscious that a great crowd was approaching, and that the people were chanting from the Koran. Louder and more sonorous grew the din, amid which I at times distinguished religious phrases. All this sounded queer, so I jumped out and ran to the parapet, through whose perforated bricks I could easily see the nearby roofs and then the roadway. A yellow, uncertain glare rose and fell between the house walls. It came from many dozen smoky, smelly torches carried by young men whose smooth faces and Meccan turbans reflected the glow.

Somebody pushed me from behind and I found that Mahomed Salie had also hurried to watch the procession that meandered past the house. Something like a hundred and fifty people must have been in the crowd, which took a goodly number of minutes to get through our alley. "God is great! God is great!" some marchers kept shouting and from other sides rang answers taken from the Fatiah.

"What is this?" I inquired of the Matof.

"This," he said, "is a club that has saved money to visit the Prophet's Grave in Medina. They go there from Mecca, because they must make some pilgrimage and cannot do so to the Haram when they live only a few paces away from it. So they travel through the desert to the north chanting all the time and that constitutes their Haj."

"Don't the Bedouins rob them?"

Salie laughed. "They have nothing and the Bedouins know it."

I watched the Hajis moving towards the city gate whence their sweet and high-pitched voices continued to ring until the dawn enabled them to begin their one hundred mile trek on mules and camels to Medina. The Matof mentioned that most of the pilgrims saved money for a whole year before they could afford to leave and that some even economised in food and clothing in order to carry through their duty.

One of Islam's insoluble puzzles is the fact that its most fanatic believers, the tribesmen of Nejd Desert delight in plundering and dragging into slavery those

men who undertake sacred journeys. I myself was earnestly thinking about a visit to the Prophet's Tomb, and all the people emphasized the extreme danger of the trek through the wilderness. Abdul Mallik told what happened when he had recently been to Medina.

"A Cape Town Malay whom I knew," said my friend, "came to Mecca about a year ago bringing, among other things, a white wife. She was a South African woman, I think, but dressed and veiled according to our people's custom, and altogether she was, as far as one could see, a good and well-behaved Moslem. Only through the fact that her husband happened to be my friend did I learn she had not been born one of the Cape Slamaaiers. Naturally I never beheld her face.

"The Malay finished his Haj in the Haram and, having travelled so far, thought he would go on with his household to pray in Medina. His wives packed up and they arranged to join the very same caravan by which I happened to be going.

"We rode into the desert on our camels. Far off I saw a lot of veiled figures, and knew that one of them was the white woman. The men talked and smoked while some carried loaded guns on their saddle pockets.

"When we were winding in a long column up a ravine, somebody yelled: 'Allah have Mercy.'

"Among the boulders above our heads stood dozens of Bedouins, smiling fiercely as they aimed their weapons.

"Every rider pulled his animal up, and then the headman of the robbers trotted forth.

"'There is a Kafir amongst you,' he shouted.

"'We are all Believers on Haj,' I answered.

"'We shall see,' said the chief. 'Where are the women?'

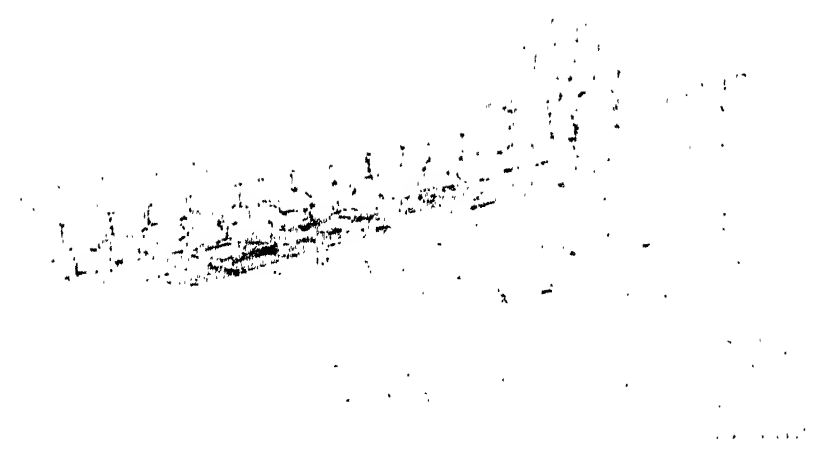
"The Bedouins surrounded the central part of the caravan and notwithstanding the shrieks of the female pilgrims stared under their veils. Then they stopped in front of one. 'Here is the Unbeliever,' yelled one robber, and pulled her to the ground.

"It was shameful, Haji, but those dogs stripped her naked, and I found the Bedouins pulling scimitars from the scabbards. The Malay, her husband, had been standing near me, but he now hurried forward. In Dutch (I understand the language) he called: "Speak the Confession of Faith.'

"She did not hesitate, but at once started loudly singing an Arabic Fatiah. Those Bedouins stared and stepped back. No one dared touch her because the Koran Law forbids any one to injure those who express the True Religion. But the chief, though he said, 'Go in peace,' also added: 'You may return to Mecca, but you may never leave the town again if you want to live.'

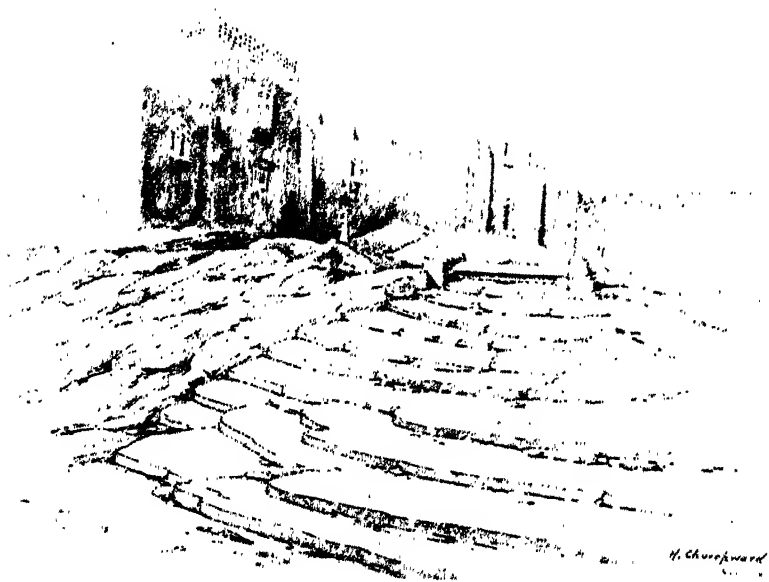
"Thus the woman had to stay here, Haji, and she still lives in a harem."

I would have liked to get some message from her, only Abdul Mallik declared I would myself get into serious danger if I tried. In any event she was, according



PRE-MOHAMMEDAN IDOLS

Ground into the pavement by millions of contemptuous feet there remain these strange Idols which stood in the Kaaba enclosure before Mahomet founded Islam



HAGAR'S STEPS

Each pilgrim must run up and down these steps seven times. They are on the site where Hagar is believed to have cried for help to Allah when her son was perishing of thirst.

to report, quite content in Islam. It may be a satisfaction to white woman-kind to know that I, perhaps the first white male pilgrim who went undisguised to Mecca, was preceded by one of their own sex.

Ever since my first rakahts beside the Kaaba I had been anxious to see the inside of the little Temple into which the Holy Stone is walled. So I felt highly pleased when I mentioned this wish to Mahomed Salie and he answered that as my Islamic credentials had been approved by the Shereef himself there ought to be no objection against my entering the strange building. He brought me to one of the learned imams who preached from the marble pulpits in the cloisters, and this grave gentleman promised he would arrange for my visit on the following morning. I met him at his house which stood beside some extremely curious ruins.

From the causeway projected strange monsters of stone, and my companion took particular care to wipe his sandals against all of them. The carvings lay in a street leading up to one of the gates of the Haram. I looked at the figures carefully in order to discover what they represented. As far as the batterings of thirteen centuries enabled me to judge, the images were those of fantastic animals and misshapen human creatures.

Mahomet, when he founded Islam, cleansed the Kaaba yard of many heathen idols which his followers overthrew and ground into the dust. These same monsters one still sees here and every pilgrim makes an especial point of treading on them in order to show his

hate for all Gods other than Allah. They have never been photographed, and I am afraid their nature will never be properly revealed because of religious prejudice.

We came into the Haram, where we found some attendants bringing a set of stairs that moved on rollers up against that end of the carpet-covered building in which gleamed the silver door. The imam climbed the steps and unlocked one of the panels, whose tangled scrollwork I could now examine at close quarters. Painstaking Persian jewellers of a good artistic period must have spent many moons in hammering and carving them. Numberless tiny flourishes, geometrical flowers, embossed zig-zags and tasteful arabesques, as from a gorgeous Eastern carpet, were wrought in the metal. On either side of this door rose a huge silver candlestick that measured, together with its thick taper, something like twelve feet in height. On great occasions, such as the Feast of Beiram, the flames are lit, and together with the uncountable lamps of the Haram help to give a fantastic beauty to the courtyard. Standing in front of the door I could read with great clearness the lettering that ran round the Holy Carpet. It consisted of many mottoes and most complicated embroideries in which continually appeared the name of Allah.

We walked into the Temple. Save for the light coming from the door it looked quite dark, and indeed there was very little to illuminate. The rectangular space I estimate to be about thirty feet long, twenty feet broad and twenty feet high. In the walls, which

consist of monstrously thick stone, there are some mysterious recesses and attempts at ornamentation but, save for its venerable associations, the Kaaba Temple does not contain anything of interest.

Still I am glad that I went to see it, for no undisguised European had ever entered this place before me.

CHAPTER XII

GOOD-BYE TO MECCA

FIVE months had run out since I reached Mecca when the Shereefah sent me definite news that next week would bring our departure to Taif. Everybody had gone, and she was almost the only person of consequence who still lingered in the Sacred City. August month now blazed across Hedjaz, so we were already half-way through the summer.

My religious duties before the Kaaba having been finished long ago, I felt that a change to a cool up country town must be very pleasant. Sunburnt until I really attained Arabian swarthinness I yearned for the feel of a bracing wind. In the Matof's money chest lay sufficient funds to allow me an additional stay of several weeks. I was doing a little day-dreaming about my plans after the trek to Taif and a possible visit to Medina when Almas, the slave, ran in and yelled shrilly: "A man has brought you a letter." In Mecca, where postal deliveries have never existed, such an arrival produced excitement, so I invited the official to come inside my room. The Arab salaamed and put his hand into a tuck along his gown within which stuck a piece of paper projecting from an opened envelope. Evidently the

officials first had the contents translated and censored. One glance showed that the document was a Turkish telegraph form, and then I read the following cable:

"RETURN TO CAPE AT EARLIEST,

"RAYNE."

The name at the end was that of my former employer, the South African producer, Leonard Rayne, who, prior to my departure, had promised he would let me know at Mecca when any new engagement became available.

I felt like a schoolboy who hears that classes will re-open earlier than the expected end of his holidays. Notwithstanding the heat and the occasionally unpleasant institutions of the city, I realized my pilgrimage, apart from its spiritual importance, was the most interesting vacation that any man ever undertook. Yet many thousands of miles away lived my wife and family, and here was a well-paid situation with a free passage home to be had by saying the word: "Yes."

Carefully I pondered in my little room while I heard muezzins summoning to prayers from the minarets around the Haram. No, there were other things in the world besides the ceremonial of this desert town. As a twentieth century Briton I had to make a living and, above all, the home fires required maintenance.

Blue was the sky and dazzling were the house-fronts when I turned away from the casement and decided to

tell the theatrical producer I would return. Skirting the dung heaps and sleeping dogs in the lane, greeting the many people who knew me since my prosecution and acquittal, I neared the Mecca Post Office with its little Ottoman crest over the white door. The official in charge happened to be there, and I wrote out a short wire addressed to Dr. Abdur Rahman, in Jeddah.

Returning through the Bazaar on my way to the Matof's house I thought I must buy a few souvenirs. So I bargained with a fellow who vended rosaries at a booth and obtained a pretty specimen from the numerous bunches of bead chains which dangled around the owner's turban. The making of these devotional accessories is one of Mecca's very few industries. A number of carvers work with knife, lathe and drill at the manufacture of the wares which are exported to the entire world. Every pious Moslem considers the local rosaries to be particularly sacred. My own collection keeps increasing because those returning South African Malay Hajis who know Mahmoud Churchward personally usually bring along a few for him. The beads vary greatly. Some expensive chains possess ivory or silver links while the common model consists of plain wood.

Learned ecclesiastical officials at the Haram had promised to find me a piece of the last Holy Carpet that had been cut up. But the pilgrims who came before me during the popular season had not allowed a single remnant to survive. By now the bits were in every corner of the Islamic World. So I wrote to my wife's

father, and he in his capacity as a prominent imam, later sent me some authentic black fragments acquired at the most reliable sources. From their weave and embroidered Arabic characters, no less than from the fact that my father-in-law, a former Meccan resident, certified them genuine, did I make sure the pieces actually came from the Kaaba Temple. I paid about four pounds for the relics, which I still own.

Amongst the useful purposes to which these carpet clippings can be applied, the Wakeel mentioned the banning of evil spirits.

"Spend a night in the House of the Jinns with the sacred cloth," he suggested, "and you will come to no harm."

I thanked him for the offer but did not try the test. Everybody in Mecca knows the famous Haunted Building which has from times beyond memory been reputed the home of evil beings. Mahomet saw the place, tried to expel its ghosts and failed. So the Prophet cursed the House of Jinns, and since then men have never lived there.

For thirteen hundred years the uncanny tall stone tenement has remained abandoned amongst the lonelier roads, with empty windows, no doors, all its stairs collapsed. I often passed the place, but never chanced on the supernatural lights, the eerie noises and the mysterious turmoil which Meccans say can be noticed there on some nights.

The Wakeel waited for me when I came home. Whether the telegraph clerk told him the contents of

my wire I do not know, but he forthwith announced how sorry he felt now that I was obliged to leave.

"It cannot be helped," I answered. "I must also live. Is the Shereef here?"

"No, Haji, but his son is."

"Which son, Feisal?"

"Yes."

"Will you bring him a message that I wish to go to Jeddah and want a permit at once."

"I obey," answered the Wakeel, "but first I must tell you the Shereefah is very unhappy. Go and see her."

"I go and see her!" I exclaimed as we entered the front lobby. "How can I go to the women's quarters?"

My friend, however, was already running towards the palace. In the yard I saw a female slave standing, veiled from her scalp to her feet and she declared that I must follow her to the mistress. The girl opened a door past which I had never been and her bare feet pattered ahead of me up some steps leading towards a lofty gallery, the same one through whose screens I had so often heard my hostess's voice. Except for the harem where I met my own wife, I had not yet entered the quarters of any Oriental woman. Apart from the resident's husband, only the nearest of her male relations—brothers, uncles, first cousins—may do such a thing. The row of rooms along which I now passed looked gorgeous but gloomy. Coloured glass lamps of Moorish shape flickered over thick carpets and silken

sofas, while pungent whiffs of smouldering loban could be breathed everywhere. Various female slaves, all shrouded in anticipation of my arrival, stood around. Some had put down sewing things and others pretended to be busy folding up washing. My guide knocked at another door and a voice called that we should come.

I walked in by myself and met a short, fat woman wearing a transparent Yasmak over her face. Dignifiedly she strode towards me and I judged she must be between thirty and forty years old. Her skin was very fair and I noticed long strings of jewellery hung round her rather thick neck. Beckoning to some slave girls in the room that they should go out, she waited before saying anything. Then she pointed out a seat on a divan to me and out of a corner fetched a Sheeshah, a kind of hookah, for her guest to smoke.

This water pipe looked luxurious, being wrapped with silver cords and possessing an amber mouthpiece set with blue turquoise and pearls in silver and gilt—altogether an instrument so costly that it seemed to belong to an Arabian Nights Palace, not to a real house. Unfortunately I could not use it. To begin with, I did not know how the thing worked, and when I ultimately did succeed in pulling a breath of tobacco fume through a basin of rose-water it tasted so fearfully strong that I felt sick. The Shereefah, who still kept silent, gently removed the apparatus and started to roll cigarettes with her hennahed finger-nails. By this time I considered a remark was due. I said that the weather was

very fine. This platitude proved as useful in the harem as in an English drawing-room. The bashful lady immediately responded: "I am most sorry that you must go."

As I smoked the cigarette (which really was good) I explained why there was no option. By this time I felt outrageously uncomfortable owing to the strangeness of the visit and the Sherceefah's manners. Our conversation dribbled on as begun, a string of very unimportant remarks about food and the distance to Jeddah. Then a servant girl brought in a coffee-set from which we drank. The Sherceefah had nothing further to say and so, salaaming, I went away again down the cushioned suite. When I got outside into the yard, the Matof, the Wakeel and several other men were waiting with wide-open eyes. Though they put no questions I could see they expected to hear what had been happening. Beside the fountain I sat down and announced that I had drunk coffee with the Lady of the House, a remark which satisfied them.

Another two days ran by. As usual I went to prayers at the Haram where many people came to ask about my journey and particularly why I wanted to go back into the country of the infidels. On a Friday evening, just after the Sabbath ended, a Palace official arrived carrying an Arabic document by which all men, in the Shereef's name, were called upon to give me a free passage as far as Jeddah. This appeal to the public, however, was not the only protection for which Feisal arranged.

"Your path to the coast, Haji," said the messenger, "will be guarded by men with guns."

"Are they riding with us?" I asked.

"No, the soldiers in the forts must keep guard."

I told this to Mahomed Salie who was to accompany me, but he simply grunted incomprehensible words. Later he told me he had taken some of my money to buy two modern revolvers, typical nickelled weapons from an English or American factory. Quite a considerable demand for these exists throughout Arabia.

The Wakeel arranged for transport while I started to pack my dressing-case and the big trunk which was to arrive after me by camel. My ekram and the camera, the piece of the Holy Carpet, the rosary, my Koran, my prayer mat, my surplus Oriental clothes, my slippers and embroidered sash I stowed away behind the cane partitions.

"How much money have I still got, Wakeel?" I inquired. He took me to the major-domo's office where an iron box stood chained to the wall. Here, in a little separate sack, lay the residue of my funds. Altogether the pilgrimage cost about £400 including presents and souvenirs. From the balance the Matof deducted his fees and then wired what remained to the coast.

Now commenced my good-bye visits. All the town seemed to know that I was going, even Feisal, to whom I went first. The young man waited in state amid the Shereef's reception-room. He asked whether I felt happy to leave, to which I gave an emphatic negative.

"I hope," he said, "Allah will let us see you again."

"Inshalla" (I hope), I answered. Then he embraced me, and I saw for the last time the Man Born to be King. I wonder if he still, as Monarch of Iraq, recalls our leave-taking in the Mecca Palace.

I also bade good-bye to Syed Mahommed Allowey. Now that I was going I clearly saw how very sorry he felt. He gave me messages to take to his friends at Mafeking and Cape Town, and even to-day, nearly twenty years after I visited him, pilgrims regularly bring me greetings from this Matof. That old rascal, the Sheikh of Zamzam, also came to make his salaam.

Zeara, the farewell visit to all the Holy Places, had become due. I went again to the shadowy scent-laden cavern which marked the Prophet's birthplace. I prayed outside each tomb in Mahomet's family graveyard; I ran once more to the steps where Hagar climbed; I drank the milky water from her well, and lastly I visited the Haram. All the ordinary prayers were performed as usual, but after making the seventh circuit along the pavement round the Kaaba Temple, I did not turn but walked backwards out of the Holy of Holies, carefully feeling for safety with my heels, until the chanting Mullahs of the cloisters told me I could once more walk in normal fashion.

Altogether I must have paid several dozen farewell calls, but as they were nearly all alike, and the conversation was extremely indifferent, I will not set out the details. Poor old Abdul Mallik, of Cape Town, was, however, very pathetic. He once more took me out



THE GRAVES OF MAHOMET'S FAMILY

This is, probably, the only picture of the tombs where the prophet's entire kin, including his wife, Fatima, are laid to rest. Even now "Syeds" or folk belonging to his family are buried here. The new Sherref of Mecca has forbidden all access to these graves.

to his house, made all his sons fetch and carry for Mahmoud Churchward, and asked again and again that I should not forget to have a look at his houses in Cape Town to see whether they were reliable investments. Finally, we embraced for the last time on this earth. About a year afterwards pilgrims reported that he had died without ever seeing the city below Table Mountain again.

Mahomed Salie came to say the Shereefah demanded to meet me. So I entered the little wicket gate and went up the gallery, the geography of which I now knew. The lady sat in her boudoir surrounded by slave girls and coffee cups. She got up and approached me saying, "Good-bye, Embarek."

"Good-bye, Shereefah," I remarked, very formally. Then I gasped. The staid widow of the learned Zain Wallie let fall her Yasmak (veil) and planted a smacking kiss upon my bald forehead. I could not suppress my chuckle, but she was a motherly sort of person and I think treated me like a big schoolboy. In Arabic the lady asked that I should excuse any deficiencies in her catering.

I replied: "Everything was perfect."

At this she became very pleased, and her good-natured face spread into a tremendous grin. When, after my return to Cape Town, I told the story of the Shereefah's kiss, to my friends and to my wife, the latter said: "That is just what she would do."

Mrs. Churchward knew her from the time she herself had studied the Koran in Mecca. People there remem-

bered my wife as the daughter of a prominent priest of Egypt. During the seven or eight years she stayed in the town many folk made her acquaintance.

I thought I had been quite long enough with the Shereefah, so I made one last salaam and went away. Downstairs the Wakeel and all his colleagues were waiting to say good-bye. One by one every man in the household put his arm round me and wished me a peaceful journey. I heard several whisper to each other that it was a novelty to embrace an Englishman. When the freedmen had finished the slaves hurried in a long queue to repeat the ceremony. Not only did I yield to the caresses of Almas and Hajar but of about twelve other unpleasantly-smelling negroes.

"Come, Haji," called the Matof from outside, "it will soon be Mograb."

With a sentimental wrench I strode into the late afternoon, and left the house which had given me so many queer experiences. Now that everything was over I felt thoroughly sorry about departing. A fairy-tale town that was where I had spent the last half-year.

Its flat roofs stood against the sunset, and in the distance I distinguished the walls of the Haram. My donkey stamped on the ancient slabs and behind them walked some other beasts that carried luggage. Mahomed Salie put his feet in the stirrups of his mount and then my homeward journey began.

In the doorway of the Shereefah's house I saw the white-robed men waving for a few minutes. The road

twisted and we were amid the Bazaar. Here and there a merchant whom I had patronized called a blessing to me. Now I entered the Jeddah gateway and from the rise below the forts I looked back several times upon Mecca. A tangle of low roofs filled with shadows, a great block of buildings in the centre. That was my last glimpse before we passed into the sunset upon the desert.

"I will come back again," I decided while the donkeys clattered over the stones.

In the soft sand beyond the Boundary Towers my guide and I made Mograb. The castles on the hills and the crags themselves stood out strangely in the dusk until, by and by, complete night came and I concentrated on my memories of the pilgrimage.

Periodically I could see the Matof's arm gliding down his white robe to a belt where the revolvers were kept. He fumbled continually with the triggers and presently I felt much more nervous about the possibility of a shot from him than about any Bedouin ambush.

This time, however, no bullets were aimed at us. Silently we trotted through the gloom until sunrise, when we reached the wretched market-square of Bera. For an hour we stopped there to let our donkeys rest and drink while the coffee-house owner brought us cups of glowing hot Mocha. Soon the sun came up. Through the gradually brightening day our trek continued.

My companion had thoughtfully acquired some sunshades, big, green-lined gamps, which were beyond the price of rubies in the morning glare. The only live creatures I saw were some very tame pigeons and partridges. Hills and narrow valleys twined round the path. I passed numerous camel skeletons, and one or two places where Mahomed Salie said there had been gruesome murders by Bedouins.

By and by the air tasted different. It was salty, much more salty than I had ever felt it before. More hills sloped above us and suddenly I looked on the sea.

It was splendidly blue, and the roaring of the waves did my ears good. Behind some hillocks were the white houses of Jeddah, while in the roadstead lay the coral-grown man-of-war. The road dropped down towards a gateway, the same one through which I left the town half a year before. I had been riding for thirty-six hours and felt very, very tired when we were among the shops again. The Matof suggested: "You should make Zeara to Eve's Grave. It lies near this town."

"First I must sleep," I pleaded. "To-morrow we will think of that."

Weariness prevented me even from calling on Dr. Abdur Rahman. I let Mahomed Salie bring me to the Shereefah's hostel, where I dropped on a pallet and, despite mosquitoes and everything else, slept well into the next day. Having taken a refreshing bath, I agreed to the Matof's proposal. We rode inland for about five

miles across the same dead mountains where two venturesome European hunters had been slain long ago. Among scant grass I saw three Moorish buildings with domes, the whole group measuring about three hundred paces from end to end. Notwithstanding that, each temple was said to cover only one portion of Eve's body. Moslems on the spot believe her to have been a giantess. One building, they declared, stood over her head, the central one was on her navel, and the farthest one was across her feet. Around the whole group of structures ran a stone wall with big gates guarded by Turkish soldiers and some Arab caretakers, who lounged waiting for pilgrims. Just at the moment the "Head" and "Foot" tombs were empty. Each one was nothing but a vaulted little mosque containing a Meerab niche to show the direction of Mecca.

I made a rakaht before them and was then taken by a very scraggy-looking sheikh, who acts as guardian of the place, to the central and most holy relic. This lay above Eve's waist, and consisted of a black stone, apparently meteoric like the one in the Kaaba. Its inky hue was also due to the kisses and fingering to which it had been exposed for over a thousand years. I went inside and touched the rock where it was let into the wall. Then I spoke the first chapter of the Koran and the Donar, a prayer for my own good.

We stayed for about an hour, during which several beggars of particularly noisome appearance arrived and I let the Matof give them alms on my behalf. To Jeddah

we rode again, and at the Shercefah's house Mahomed Salie said we must now part. I felt sorry to see the last of this good-natured fellow. He embraced me and put his shaggy face against mine. Then he rode away into the desert, home to Mecca. While I stood outside the Pilgrim House, who should arrive but a messenger, a young Arab, who said that Dr. Abdur Rahman wanted me to come over for dinner. The courteous consul hurried to meet me before I reached his house, and showed genuine delight that everything had passed off so much better than he had foretold.

"As soon as I heard of the Indian who complained about you," he reported, "I kept my eyes open for him, but I am sorry to say the gentleman has not been here."

At our meal he told me that the Khedival Line boat would be calling within two or three days. Until then I took things easy in the doctor's comfortable house and in his company, both of which were very pleasant. More than once I judiciously joked about his qualities as a prophet, but he did not object. While shaving one morning I looked through the window and saw a ship in the roadstead. Within ten minutes my luggage was packed. A boat came ashore bringing mail bags. Dr. Abdur Rahman walked with me to the beach to see me safely into the gig. I thanked my friend for his goodness. The oarsmen went through the surf, the houses grew smaller, the steamer grew larger, I was up the gangway and looking for the last time on Holy Arabia.

A little sack of postal matter arrived, and then the boilers whistled a good-bye to Jeddah. Past some surprised-looking officers I went into a cabin, took off my Oriental clothes and was no longer Haji Mahmoud Mobarek, but Mr. Hedley Churchward, passenger for South Africa (via Suez).



GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

MR. CHURCHWARD, who read and wrote Arabic, did not spell many words as other Eastern travellers do. He declared that a great many usual forms do not convey the ordinary colloquial pronunciation of the natives. Thus he said "Ekram" instead of the commoner "Ihram." Throughout the book I have put down Arabic words and phrases just as he put them into English.

<i>Allah Akreem.</i>	.	God help me.
<i>Azeema</i>	.	A charm inscribed with a Koran extract.
<i>Azhar</i>	.	The great Moslem College at Cairo.
<i>Bismillah</i>	.	In the name of God.
<i>Cadi</i>	.	This word possesses a double meaning. Usually it signifies a Judge but in the Mahomedan religion he is also a high ecclesiastical officer.
<i>Dahibiyeh</i>	.	A Nile sailing boat.
<i>Dum</i>	.	A Mecca parlour game. The word means "blood."
<i>Ekram</i>	.	The wrapper worn by pilgrims during the last stage of their journey to the Kaaba.
<i>Fatihah</i>	.	The first chapter of the Koran, which contains the Confession of Faith.

<i>Frank</i>	.	.	An obsolete Eastern name for a European.
<i>Gujerati</i>	.	.	A language much spoken in India.
<i>Hafiz</i>	.	.	One who knows the Koran by heart.
<i>Haj</i>	.	.	The pilgrimage to Mecca and the ceremonies constituting part thereof.
<i>Haji</i>	.	.	A title of honour borne by those who have made the pilgrimage.
<i>Haram</i>	.	.	The Kaaba enclosure; the vicinity of Mecca.
<i>Houri</i>	.	.	A female companion for Believers in Paradise.
<i>Inshallah</i>	.	.	Literally "If God wills." Used as an expression of hope.
<i>Imam</i>	.	.	A teacher and preacher of the Moslem religion.
<i>Juike Halmer</i>	.	.	A simple version of the Koran used as a primer in religious schools.
<i>Kabob</i>	.	.	A kind of meat rissole.
<i>Kafir</i>	.	.	Also spelt with two "fs." Strictly speaking one who believes in no God at all. Often used in the East to describe a Christian or a Jew, although it should really only apply to an Atheist or an Idolator.
<i>Loban</i>	.	.	An aromatic drug found near Mecca in a natural state. Smells pleasantly when burnt, and is used as a flavouring for cigarettes and coffee.
<i>Malekah</i>	.	.	A Queen.
<i>Malik</i>	.	.	A King.
<i>Matof</i>	.	.	A professional pilgrim guide. Applied to the hereditary holders of such an office and their employees who assist them.

- Meerab* . . . The niche existing in every mosque to indicate the direction of Mecca.
- Mirza* . . . A "clerk" in the medieval sense, one who can write skilfully. Popular in Persia.
- Mograb* . . . Evening prayers prescribed by Mahomet. To obviate any accusations that his followers worshipped the heavenly body the Prophet forbade Moslems to make Mograb while the sun is setting.
- Molet* . . . A birthday; a recitation, usually an anecdote or a story delivered on such a day.
- Mouderieh* . . . A magistrate in Egypt.
- Mullah* . . . A learned man.
- Musjid* . . . A mosque.
- Mushrabieh* . . . A carved screen.
- Nur Allah* . . . "The light of God."
- Rakaht* . . . The prescribed prostration on a Prayer Carpet. It consists of several gestures. Different prayers contain different numbers of rakahts.
- Ramadan* . . . The Fasting Month of the Moslem calendar. Its date is movable according to the lunar phases.
- Shaitan* . . . Satan.
- Saffer Khan* . . . A hostel for travellers by the roadside, particularly pilgrims.
- Sheeshah* . . . A water pipe, somewhat like a hookah.
- Sheikh* . . . Apart from its conventional meaning this is a courtesy title.
- Shereef* , . . . The hereditary ruler of Mecca. The word is also used as a title for lesser dignitaries.

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<i>Shereefah</i>	.	.	The wife of a Shereef.
<i>Shul Minul Allah</i>	.	.	A work of God.
<i>Sura</i>	.	.	A Koran chapter.
<i>Syed</i>	.	.	A descendant of the Prophet.
<i>Tarbush</i>	.	.	A fez.
<i>Wakeel</i>	.	.	A major-domo. A general agent for a person of consequence.
<i>Wakf</i>	.	.	A charitable endowment.
<i>Walie</i>	.	.	A governor. Also spelt without the "e."
<i>Zaida</i>	.	.	A female saint.
<i>Zamzam</i>	.	.	Literally "bubbling." The well of Hagar at Mecca.
<i>Zarf</i>	.	.	An Arabic sweetmeat-dish.
<i>Zeara</i>	.	.	A farewell visit.

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